

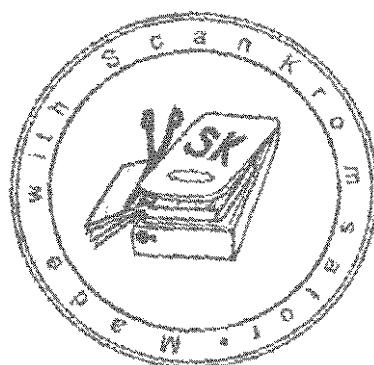
LESSONS WITH A GRANDMASTER

Enhance your chess strategy and psychology with Boris Gulko



Boris Gulko & Dr. Joel R. Sneed

EVERYMAN CHESS



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Preface

The club player is unaware of the subtleties that exist in grandmaster chess both strategically and tactically. The psychology of the chess struggle is even less well understood. Grandmasters analyze chess at a depth that is unfathomable to amateurs; moreover, they have extensive knowledge of chess history and opening theory as well as extraordinary endgame technique and tactical vision. However, having reached such a high level can make it difficult to understand what is lacking in the mind of the amateur, and therefore, what to explain, what not to explain, what to assume, etc. The purpose of this book is to bridge the gap between grandmaster and amateur through a conversation between Grandmaster Boris Gulko, the only player to hold both the USSR and US championship titles, and student Joel R. Sneed, PhD, a professor of psychology and amateur chess player.

Introduction

Joel: Could you tell me a little bit about your development as a chess player, when you started and what that was like?

Boris: In 1959, at the age of 12, I entered the House of Pioneers chess club for the first time. My first impression of the game was that it was a world of adventure, a world where pawns become queens and the weak unexpectedly conquer the strong. One has to apply one's mind with all one's strength and miracles will come to pass on the board. As I gradually assimilated the logic of chess, its world began to acquire order. Thirteen years of training later and I learned to navigate the wild seas of complications, the calm waters of maneuvering, the labyrinths of strategy, and the depths of the endgame. In the following 37 years, I discovered for myself much that was new. When I lost my youth, first and foremost, I discovered a quality in myself useful in any endeavor: the nurturing of character. Like the acquisition of the depths of strategy, this process is never completed. At the beginning of the journey, I was excessively self-confident; in my mature years, I now and then underestimate myself, and chess always corrects my self-assessment.

Joel: One of the things that attract me to chess is how much you can learn about yourself through the game. What your central conflicts are as a person, how you cope with these conflicts. What powerful feelings you have and in what way you defend against and manage them (sometimes) in order to keep your wits about you. The fundamentals of psychic conflict, between love and hate (aggression), which Freud articulated so well at the turn of the century, are right there in front of you to see (if you choose to).

Boris: Yes, our game teaches us the faculty of combat in a high-stress situation. Your opponent is at a level close to yours and invests all his energy in the game. To succeed you must understand the dynamics of the struggle and be able to control yourself. Now, having completed my competitive journey, I have decided to share what I have learned with you and interested readers.

Joel: Can you tell us a little something about your chess achievements?

Boris: I had two chess careers. One in the Soviet Union (finished in 1979 when we applied for emigration) and the second started seven years later after I reached the US in 1986. The highlights of my first career are winning the Moscow Championship – 1974 and 1981. In 1975, I tied for second with three other players (Tal, Vaganian, and Romanishin) in the USSR Championship, and in 1977, I became co-champion.

Joel: Who were your major competitors at that time?

Boris: Petrosian, Tal, Karpov, Polugaevsky, Geller, and Smyslov among others.

Joel: Wow! That's amazing. I'm always so amazed that your "colleagues" in those years were world champions or world champion contenders.

Boris: Another big step for me was qualifying for the World Championship Interzonal tournament in 1975, when I tied for first with three others. I tied for first with Jan Timman in two international tournaments in Yugoslavia: Sombor 1974 and Niksic 1978. Interestingly, 27 years later I tied for first again with Jan Timman in the Malmö tournament in Sweden. I also won the Capablanca Memorial in Cuba (1976). This was the extent of my participation in international tournaments because I simply was not allowed to travel by the Soviet authorities. After I immigrated to the United States, I played in more international tournaments each year than I did my whole life in the USSR.

Joel: It sounds like you had quite a struggle with the Soviet system.

Boris: Well, you know, the most severe duel of my life came not in chess but in a battle with the Soviet system. We applied for immigration in May of 1979 but did not leave until seven years later. During those years my opponent was the "armed wing of the Communist party" – the KGB – which I wrote about in my book, *The KGB Plays Chess*. The culmination of this "game" with the KGB was a month of daily demonstrations with my wife Anna Akhsharumova (Gulko) when each day we were arrested. (By the way, my wife was also a very strong chess player who won both the USSR championship – twice – and the US championship.) Nevertheless, this campaign won our freedom. I am certain that my experience with struggle in chess helped in this engagement.

Joel: So you lost seven years of your career?

Boris: Yes, from the age of 32-39, but I finally immigrated to the United States in 1986 and started my second career in chess. In 1994, I qualified as one of eight

candidates for the match with Kasparov, along with Vishy Anand, Nigel Short, and Vladimir Kramnik among others. I drew the match with Short but lost on tiebreak. I was in the top 16 for the World Championship in 2000 but again was unlucky in a tiebreak. I won the US Championship in 1994 with 7 wins, 6 draws, and no losses, 1½ points ahead of Yasser Seirawan and Larry Christiansen, who tied for second place. In 1999, I won the US Championship again. My other achievements included winning the US Open Championship in 1998 and 2007; I also won the World Open, American Open, and USA Masters. In addition, I won various international tournaments including:

France: Marseilles 1986 – 1; Paris 1987 – 1; Cannes 1987 – 1-2.

Switzerland: Biel 1987 – 1-2; Biel 1988 – 1-2; Berne 1994 – 1.

Spain: León 1992 – 1; Las Palmas 1996 – 1; San Sebastián 1986 – 2.

Italy: Rome 1988 – 1-3; Reggio Emilia 1991 – 2.

Denmark: Copenhagen 2000 – 1-3.

Sweden: Malmö 2001 – 1-2.

Holland: Amsterdam 1987 – 2-4; Amsterdam 1988 – 1-3.

Germany: Munich 1991 – 2-5.

Armenia: Yerevan 1994 – 3.

USA: San Francisco 1995 – 2-3.

Canada: Montréal 1992 – 1.

Chile: Vina del Mar 1988 – 2; Curaçao 2003 – 1-3, 2004 – 1-2.

Colombia: Ibagué 1997 – 1-2; Cali (continental championship) 2001 – 2-5.

Joel: Wow, that's amazing. You managed to accomplish quite a lot and in the face of tremendous adversity. It is a real privilege to be able to work with you. Let's tell the reader how we came to decide to write this book.

Boris: When I started to work with you, I found that your attitude towards studying chess was typical for American club players. You like others had a desire to study openings, which you thought could inevitably bring you to victory. When we went over your games you also focused on your openings and felt that the battle occurred there. We started with studying openings (of course you need to know a

little about it), but as we progressed I began to focus more and more on teaching you the elements of strategy and tactics as they occurred in high-level games. As we went through games, it seemed that games of my own were most instructive to you. Here your natural curiosity about psychology came through as you pressed me to explain how and why I made one decision over another. Here the idea came to us to take this conversation and make it available to everyone.

Joel: Right, I was especially interested in representing the average club player in the conversation, and thought that my training in interviewing and psychotherapy would enable me to help draw out some of the nuances that are not accessible to the average chess player.

Boris: But I know from my years of learning that familiarity with good examples only doesn't make a player develop the necessary problem solving skills. So I marked in the games we were working on critical moments and began asking you to find the correct way. I also marked each problem noting its level of complexity to give you a sense of what kind of effort was required in the position.

We started with less complicated games and moved to more complicated. I was satisfied as from lesson to lesson I could see an increase in your understanding of chess strategy. Of course, you were simultaneously learning elements of tactics and the dynamics of the chess struggle and its psychology. I found it especially interesting to discuss with you questions of chess psychology. As professor of psychology, you found deep connections between my practical advice and theoretical psychology. Maybe you could tell the reader a little bit about yourself?

Joel: Of course. I am from New York City and attended NYU as an undergraduate where I majored in psychology. I received my PhD in clinical psychology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, studying change in personality across the lifespan. After completing a postdoctoral fellowship in statistics, I began focusing my research on geriatric depression as a post-doctoral fellow at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute. I am now Assistant Professor of Psychology at Queens College of the City University of New York, an adjunct Assistant Professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University and the New York State Psychiatric Institute in the Departments of Geriatric Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology. I am Director of the Lifespan Lab and my research is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health. As a clinical psychologist, I have received extensive training in the assessment and treatment of psychopathology. (If readers would like to learn more about me or my research, they can visit <www.lifespanlab.org>.)

Boris: Very impressive. It seems to me that your background as a scientist may have created some additional problems for your progress in chess. I realized this early on because your method of thinking is too abstract. As a researcher, you want rules and general principles and to treat chess like science, but chess is part science, part art, and part sport, which is what makes it so fascinating. After reading some classical books in chess instruction like Nimzowitsch's *My System*, you were armed with knowledge about some common ideas, but under the influence of these books (and perhaps your scientific background) you developed too dogmatic an attitude for evaluating chess positions. This is one of the reasons I began to set problems for you in order of difficulty to make the process of thinking and solving chess problems more concrete. I think together we realized that it might be useful to prepare a book of my games using the method we developed, and so we set off on our journey.

Joel: And so we did.

Boris: Side by side we examined my games against: Karpov, discussing the struggle for an open file; Kasparov (two games), discussing questions about the strategy of defense; Hübner, learning about prophylaxis; Smyslov, studying weak squares; Korchnoi and Shabalov (as White), discussing the secret of positions with only major pieces. Throughout I tried to discuss with you the paradoxical problems inherent in chess strategy. In my games with Gelfand and Shabalov (as Black), it was a pawn sacrifice aimed at excluding from action one of my opponent's pieces; in the game with Yusupov, it was the premise for counterattack; with Hort and Adams, it was a discussion about real and phantom weaknesses; with Browne, we examined the advantages of double pawns in the center; with Hector, we focused on the sudden change of plans and a pawn storm for positional purposes; with Suetin, it was about the pluses of weak and isolated pawns, which leave for your peaces a lot of open files and diagonals; with Larsen, we concerned ourselves with the qualities of "bad" bishops; i.e. that they are not useful in defense but they can be very valuable when you have the initiative. The elements of chess strategy contained in these games make up a large portion of modern chess strategy often not discussed in classical manuals. My goal was to make this inner knowledge available to you.

As I indicated before, chess cannot be mastered simply by reading. As the remarkable training success of Mark Dvoretsky has shown, the best method of achieving mastery is the finding of solutions. Therefore, at appropriate moments I will suggest assignments to find the right path. The assignments will be at five levels of difficulty: (1) Uncomplicated. (2) More complicated. (3) Moderately complicated.

(4) Highly complicated. (5) Exceedingly complicated. In each of the games, I pose problems for you and the reader to solve, and you have been humble enough to make your thinking process known to everyone. I recommend that the reader solve these problems and to compare with both your analysis and mine. They will probably see similarities with your thinking process and my solutions are aimed to help correct the flaws in your reasoning.

Joel: Who is this book for?

Boris: I think this book will be extremely useful for club players who want to improve their understanding of chess strategy and broaden their arsenal of strategic ideas but I also think it will be interesting to professional players. When I played competitively, I used solving problems from practical games as an excellent tool for bringing myself to the best form, and the marked positions in the book can be used for this purpose for players of any strength.

Joel: Well, I think that about does it for our introduction unless you think we have left anything out?

Boris: No, I don't think so, let's get started. As I said, chess cannot be learned from reading!

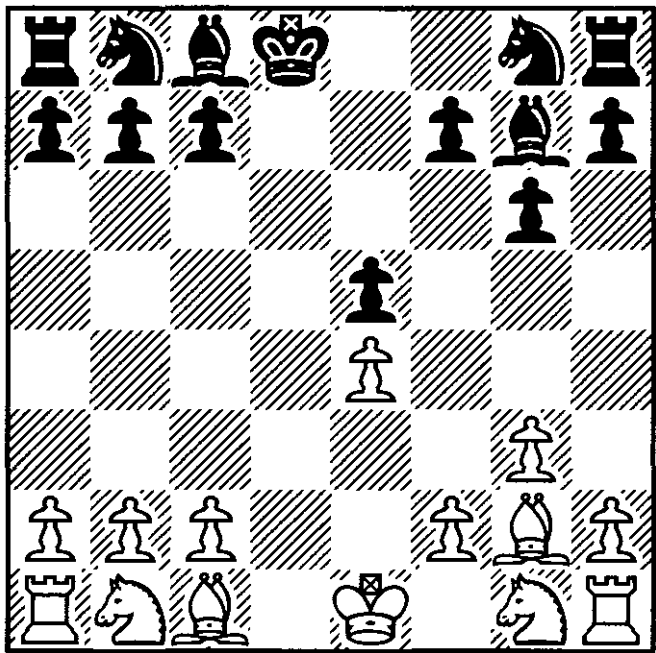
Game One
B.Gulko-T.Radjabov
 Malmö 2001
Modern Defense

1 g3 g6 2 Bg2 Bg7 3 d4 d6 4 e4 e5?!

Boris: In a previous tournament that year against Azmaiparashvili, Radjabov played 4...Nf6. I thought that he might have been worried about my preparation for the game. This is an interesting psychological moment. He was young and I was experienced, and in general, more experienced players excel in quiet positions and endgames where experience plays a more important role than the calculation of concrete variations (which benefits young players). Experience means I know more about chess (i.e. have more knowledge about chess ideas because of playing more over many years). Three months before I played Radjabov for the first time in Corus, I transposed that game into an early endgame and won. Usually experienced players are better in positions without queens, whereas younger players are better in positions that require calculations. I was lucky that the present game repeated the scenario of the first.

Joel: That's really interesting. It is consistent with research on the rise and fall of fluid and crystallized intelligence across the lifespan. Fluid intelligence (e.g. problem solving) tends to decline with age, whereas crystallized intelligence (knowledge) remains stable or perhaps may even improve slightly.

5 dxe5! dxe5 6 Qxd8+ Kxd8



Exercise: What is the best way for White to develop the initiative? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: This seems completely equal. This position is nearly symmetrical, both sides have the same material; in terms of minor pieces both have restricted bishops on the long diagonals; both sides are undeveloped. The only difference is that White can still castle and he will be able to connect his rooks quicker. This is a temporary advantage that needs to be used quickly. Therefore, I would look for ways of developing my queenside and to castle long.

Boris: Your thoughts are generally correct but too general. Here it is important to find a concrete way. When you have a position with an advantage in time you have to find an object of attack. The move b2-b3 is very difficult to see, but for me it was easy to find because of the classic game between Geller and Lerner (Minsk 1979). In a similar position, Geller played b2-b3 and developed the initiative by attacking the e5-pawn.

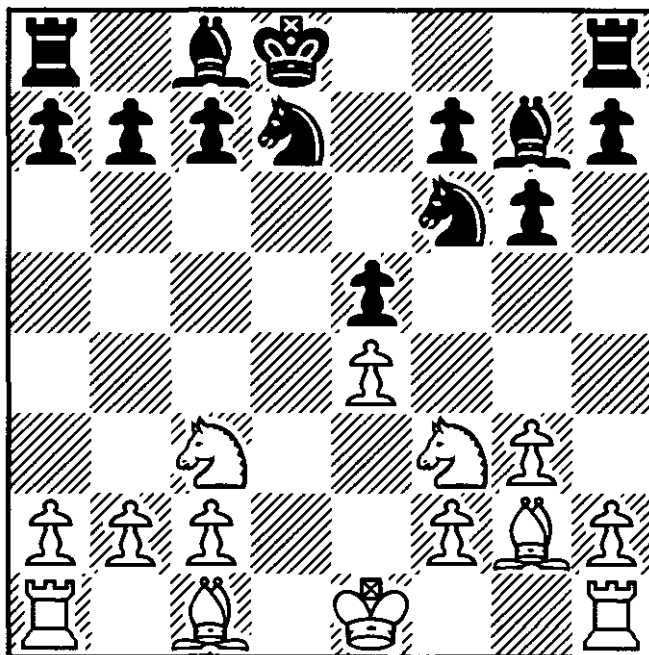
E.Geller-K.Lerner, USSR Championship, Minsk 1979

1 e4 d6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Nc3 g6 4 g3 Bg7 5 Bg2 e5 6 dxe5 dxe5 7 Qxd8+ Kxd8 8 Nf3 Nbd7

(see following diagram)

9 b3! Ne8 10 Bb2 f6 11 O-O-O c6 12 Ne1 Kc7 13 Nd3 Nd6 14 f4 Nf7 15 Rhf1 exf4 16 gxf4 Re8 17 Rde1 Nf8 18 Nd1 Bd7 19 Kb1 Rad8 20 Ne3 Nd6 21 e5 fxe5 22 fxe5 Nf5 23 Nc4 Ne6 24 Bh3 Rg8 25 Nd6 Ned4 26 Bxd4 Nxd4 27 Rf7 Bf8 28 Nc5 Rg7 29 Nxd7

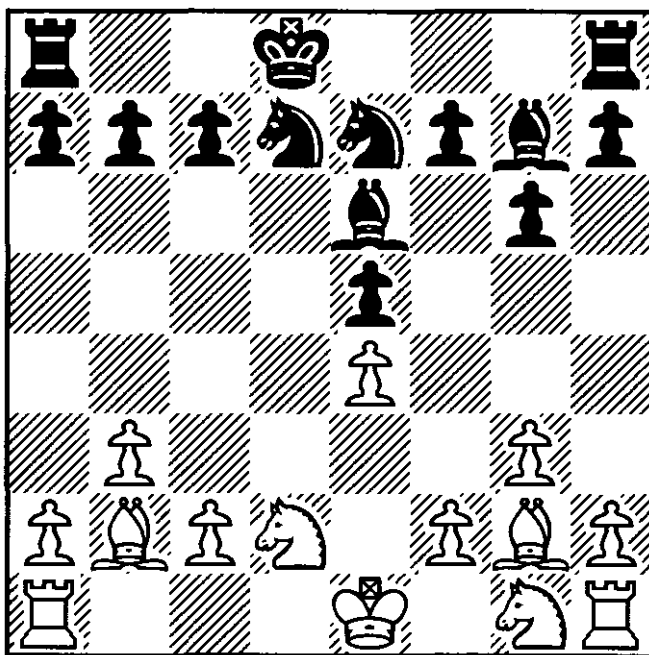
Rxf7 30 Nxf7 Rxd7 31 Bxd7 Kxd7 32 Rd1 Ke6 33 Rxd4 1-0



7 b3! Be6

Boris: I thought ...Nc6 was stronger, but after 7...Nc6 8 Bb2 Nd4 9 Na3 Ne7 (9...c6) 10 0-0-0 Bd7 11 f4 White is still better.

8 Bb2 Nd7 9 Nd2 Ne7



Exercise: What is White's best way to proceed? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: White's advantage is temporary. He needs to find ways to speed up his development and cannot allow Black time to untangle himself. White has a bad bishop as does Black. Black's good bishop, which prevents White from using the c4-square with his knight, is active and well placed. Therefore, 10 Bh3 accomplishes many objectives. It speeds up White's development because 10...Bxh3 seems forced, otherwise White will take and double Black's pawns with a lasting advantage in the endgame. The move 10 Bh3: a) gets rid of Black's good bishop; b) allows White to use c4 for his knight; and c) rids himself of his own bad light-squared bishop.

Boris: Very good! This move gives White a permanent advantage. I get rid of my bad bishop and exchange his good bishop.

Joel: I found this move only because I noticed that he can't really avoid the exchange.

10 Bh3!

Boris: 10 O-O-O Nc6 11 f4 was possible too because White could play Bh3 later, transposing to the game position.

10...Bxh3

Joel: What about 10...f5 - ?

Boris: In general, when you are worse you should avoid active moves, especially in the endgame. 11 Ngf3 h6 12 O-O-O, with the idea of Rhe1 attacking the weak center pawns, would give White the advantage.

11 Nxh3 f6

Joel: This prevents 12 Ng5 but it restricts Black's dark-squared bishop still further.

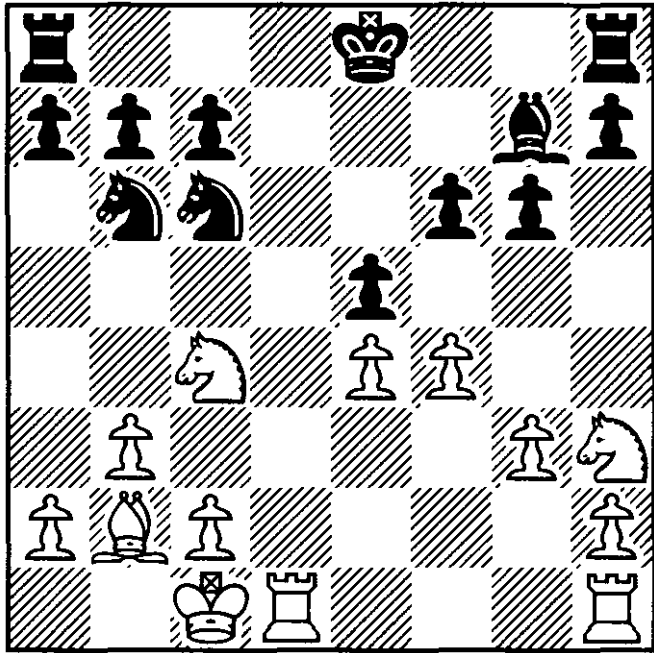
12 O-O-O Ke8

Boris: Radjabov plays this with idea of next playing ...Kf7, connecting his rooks.

13 f4

Boris: When you have advantage in time (development), you have to create more tension and make the position more sharp, more dynamic. Kasparov says there are three kinds of advantages: 1) time, 2) position, and 3) material. In this position, I have a time advantage.

13...Nc6 14 Nc4 Nb6?!



Exercise: What does White have to do? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: Black has just played 14...Nb6 and if White does nothing then Black will obviously play 15...Nxc4 and cripple White's queenside pawn structure. White can either take or retreat when the knight on b6 may be on a less-than-ideal square. If 15 Nxb6 axb6 then White has to spend a tempo protecting the a2-pawn, otherwise he would double on the d-file. Therefore, 15 Ne3 is called for.

Boris: Correct. It was preferable to play 14...Rd8!? 15 Ne3 Ne7 and in the case of 16 Nd5 Black has 16...c6, which keeps the position closed.

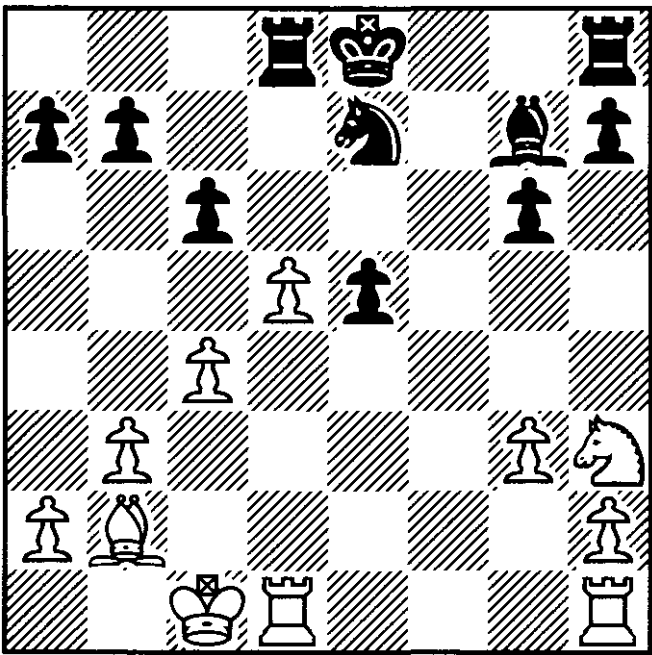
15 Ne3!

Boris: My knight is heading to d5.

15...Rd8 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 exd5 Ne7

Boris: 17...Nb4 was bad because of 18 c4 Nxa2+ 19 Kb1 Nb4 20 fxe5 fxe5 21 Ng5 and the knight will penetrate on e6 with a winning position.

18 c4 c6 19 fxe5 fxe5



Exercise: How can White develop the initiative? (difficulty level 2)

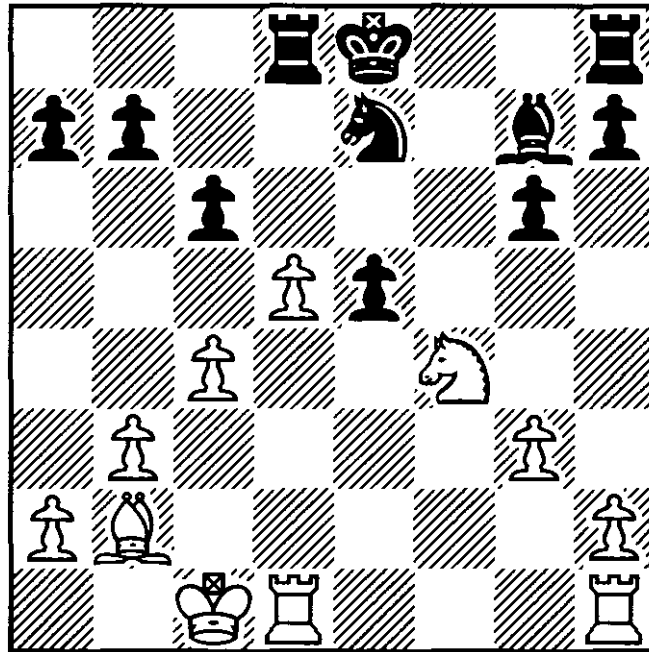
Joel: White has a queenside pawn majority and the better pawn structure in general as Black has an isolated pawn on e5. White has the better bishop as Black's bishop on g7 is tied to the defense of the e5-pawn. The knights for both White and Black seem to be on less than ideal squares. White's rooks are connected. Therefore, White has the advantage. Black is threatening to win the d5-pawn so White needs to either take or push. If 20 dxc6 Nxc6, then Black has improved the position of his knight, which protects e5 (potentially freeing up the bishop) and controls some important central squares. In some case, it could go to d4. In this case, Black's knight would be better than White's knight on h3. Therefore, 20 d6 should be played. Although White would like to improve the position of his knight, 20 Ng5 runs into 20...Bh6, which is not what White wants.

20 Nf4!

Boris: After 20 d6 Nf5 21 c5 Kd7 Black has enough pieces to defend e5, the position has become closed, and my advantage has evaporated.

Joel: But you still have a pawn on d6.

Boris: Yes, but it is well blockaded and there is no obvious way to break through.



Exercise: What is the best defense for Black in this position? (difficulty level 4)

20...exf4?!

Joel: If Black does nothing, White will play 21 Ne6. Although Black can play 21...Bh6+ and then move the rook, the knight on e6 would most likely lead to a winning combination. How should Black defend? First, is taking the knight a possibility? Yes, but it leads to a position in which the bishop will be much stronger than the knight on an open board with the king stuck in the center; e.g. 20...exf4 21 Bxg7 Rg8 22 Be5 fxg3 23 Bxg3. Against castling, White simply plays 21 Ne6 winning the exchange. A king move to f7 would allow 21 Ne6 followed by Rhf1+, disrupting the connection between Black's rooks. This leaves 20...cxd5 or 20...Nf5. I don't think 20...Nf5 accomplishes much, so 20...cxd5 21 Ne6 Bh6+ 22 Kb1 Rc8 23 cxd5 Nf5 followed by ...Nd6 is what I would have played.

Boris: You are right that Black must continue with 20...cxd5, but the continuation you offered is incorrect. Let's take a look at some variations: 20...cxd5! 21 Ne6 and now your variation 21...Bh6+ 22 Kb1 Rc8 misses that the e5-pawn is hanging, so I have a winning position. The move that had to be played was 21...d4!. The reason is that it keeps the position closed but it is difficult to see because our nature (human nature) is to be greedy. Then after 22 Rhe1?! Bf6!? 23 Nxd8 Kxd8 24 Kc2 the position has suddenly become unclear. To keep the advantage White had to not be greedy as well: 22 Nxg7+! Kf7 23 Rhe1 Nc6 24 b4! Rc8 25 Kb1! Kxg7 26 b5 Na5 27 Rxe5 with a big advantage for White.

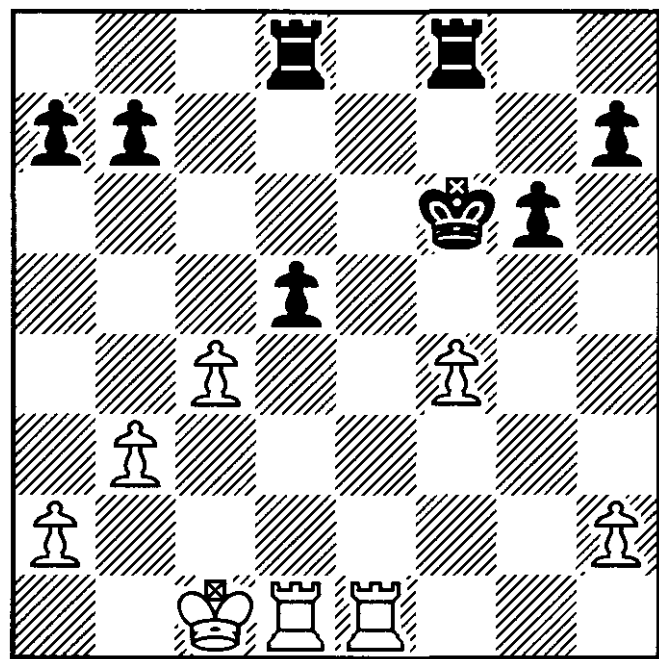
21 Bxg7 Rg8 22 Bf6 Rf8

Boris: Now we have equal material but White still has an advantage in time, plus I am going to win a pawn.

23 Bxe7 Kxe7 24 Rhe1+ Kf6

Boris: 24...Kd6 25 gxf4 was no better, as Black doesn't have 25...Rxf4 because of 26 dxc6+.

25 gxf4 cxd5



Exercise: Which recapture on d5 is correct? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I think I would just simply play 26 cxd5. In this position, White has a passed pawn and the two rooks can combine in attack and defense. However, I think 26 Rxd5 is interesting because of 26...Rxd5 27 cxd5 and the pawns control e5 and e6, the black king is cut off from the passed d-pawn, and the king cannot take the f-pawn because of Rf1+ winning. Therefore, I think 26 Rxd5 is better and that's what I would play here.

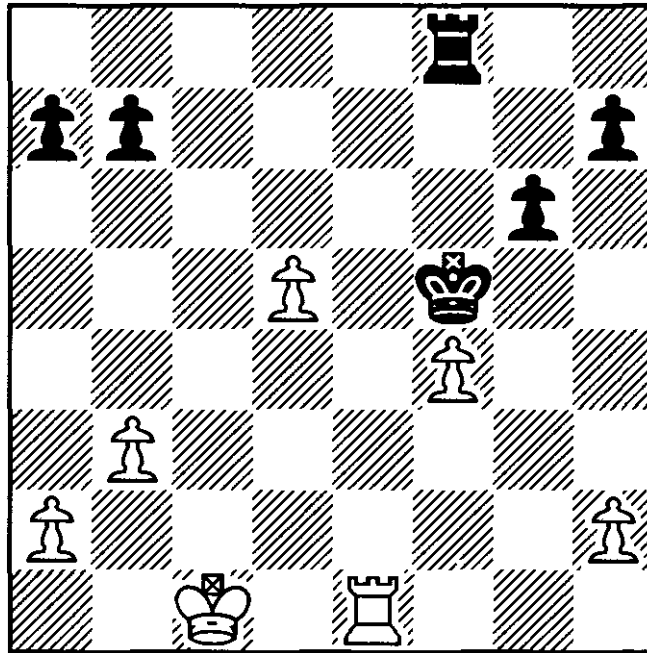
26 Rxd5!

Boris: Very good! 26 Rxd5 is much better than 26 cxd5. If I take with the pawn he plays ...Rd6 and ...Rc8 and his rooks are active and mine are not. I also don't have any squares in which I can penetrate into his camp. So it is better to exchange. *When you have the advantage in the endgame, exchange pieces not pawns; if you*

are worse, exchange pawns not pieces (this is Fine's rule).

26...Rxd5 27 cxd5 Kf5!

White would easily win in the case of 27...Rd8 28 Re5 h6 29 h4 Rd6 30 Kd2 and the king goes to support the d-pawn.



Exercise: How should White proceed? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: Well, 28 Re7 would give Black a passed pawn on the kingside with Black's king active and White's king is sitting on c1. I would have played 28 Kd2 bringing the king to the center because Black obviously cannot take the f4-pawn.

28 Re7!

Boris: White cannot lose time or the opportunity to penetrate to the seventh rank, which Russians call the glutton role.

Joel: What does that mean?

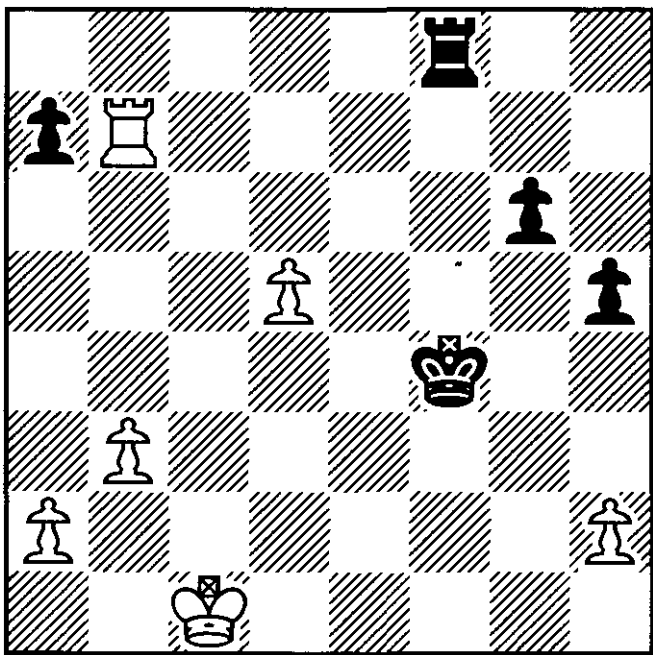
Boris: You are a glutton for punishment if you allow your opponent to penetrate to the seventh rank. In the case of 28 Kd2 Rd8 I would lose all of my advantage.

Joel: It is interesting that you chose the active 28 Re7. I think this is a point where I become more afraid of my opponents threats rather than appreciative of my own. You are the first to the seventh but I am afraid of the passed pawn this allows.

28...h5

Boris: It was better to play 28...Kxf4! 29 Rxb7 Ke5 30 Rxh7 Rf2, when White needs to play precisely.

29 Rxb7 Kxf4



Exercise: What is the best way for White? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: For some reason, 30 h4 looks tempting here. It stops the g-pawn and White's rook may be able to support the passed d-pawn and protect the h-pawn at the same time. For example, 30...Kg4 31 Rb4+ and Rd4. Therefore, Black should respond with 30...Ke5, which looks strong. White may not be able to hold the d-pawn but he can attack with the more active rook, so 31 Rxa7 Kxd5 32 Rg7 Rf6 and now White has two connected passed pawns on the queenside and the rook behind the backward g-pawn preventing any progress on that wing.

Boris: You should not play on the wing where you are weaker. After 30 h4, he would play 30...g5 and he already has a passed pawn. I have to use my trumps and play where I am stronger. In this case I have to use my d-pawn as a decoy.

30 d6!

Joel: It seems, as you can see from the way I am thinking, I am too concerned with my opponent's pawn majority instead of creating threats of my own. The best way to defend is to attack! You create active threats that tie Black down.

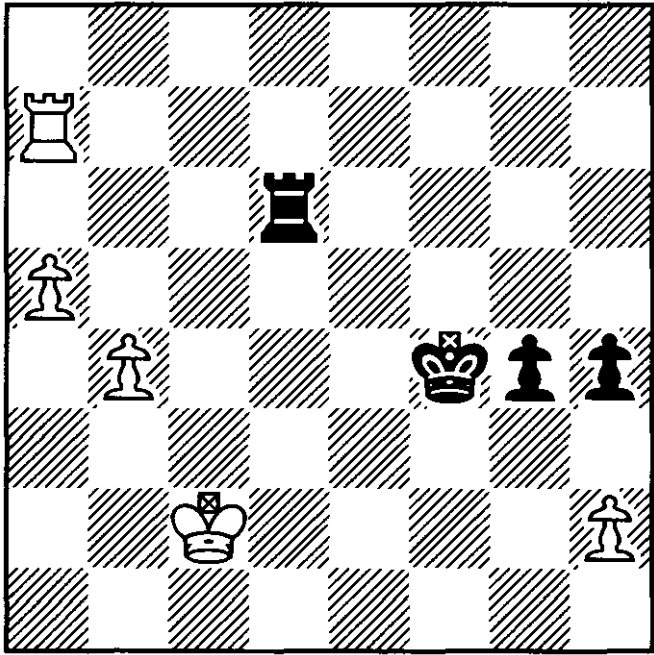
Boris: Yes, I agree with you. You do not appreciate your trumps and create active threats. From my previous analysis, I showed that if Black could get his rook to the

second rank he would have counterplay. The move 30 d6 forces Black to worsen the position of his rook, which ties Black down and prevents the rook from penetrating to my second rank.

30...Rd8 31 Rxa7 Rxd6

Boris: Now I have only to bring my king into the game to win.

32 a4 h4 33 a5 g5 34 Kc2 g4 35 b4?!



Boris: This inaccuracy gives Black an amusing chance to escape. The right way was 35 Rh7! h3 36 b4 Re6 37 Rf7+! Kg5 38 Kd3 Rd6+ 39 Kc3 Re6 40 b5 Re3+ 41 Kd4 Re2 42 b6 Rxh2 43 a6 Rd2+ 44 Kc3 h2 45 Rh7 g3 46 b7 and White wins.

35...Ke4?

Boris: In the case of 35...g3! 36 hxg3+ hxg3 37 Rg7 my estimation was that I would sacrifice the rook at the appropriate moment and my two connected passed pawns would beat the rook. However, *Rybka* found the computer line 37...Kf3 38 Kc3 Rh6!! 39 b5 Rh5! 40 Kc4 Rh4+ 41 Kd5 Rg4 42 Rxg4 Kxg4 43 b6 g2 44 b7 g1Q 45 b8Q and Black transposes to a queen ending. According to computer analysis, this queen ending is a draw, but for Black it is very difficult to defend because of the poor position of his king on g4.

36 Rg7 Kf5 37 Kc3 Rc6+ 38 Kb3 Rc1 39 a6 h3 40 b5 Rb1+ 41 Kc4 Ra1 42 Kc5 Kf4 43 a7 1-0

Lessons with a Grandmaster

Joel: I take several important lessons from this game. The first lesson is the importance of the time factor in quiet positions and how to keep the initiative. As you discussed, the key is to find an object of attack, which you found with the move 7 b3. The second lesson is the importance of playing aggressively and not to play on the side where you are weaker. In the endgame, you did not become overly concerned about your opponent's threats because you realized your threats (e.g. Re7 and d5-d6) were more important and would keep him occupied.

Boris: I would add that not being greedy even in the endgame is a very important lesson too. As I indicated, it was important for Black to offer the exchange sacrifice in order to keep the position closed, but it was equally important for White not to accept it.

Game Two
W.Browne-B.Gulko
 US Championship, Los Angeles 1991
Pirc Defense

Boris: My opponent was six-time US champion Walter Browne. It was an elimination tournament so I had opportunity to prepare for this game. He liked forcing moves and liked to calculate, so my plan was to get into a positional game without forced variations, so I chose a variation I never played before or since.

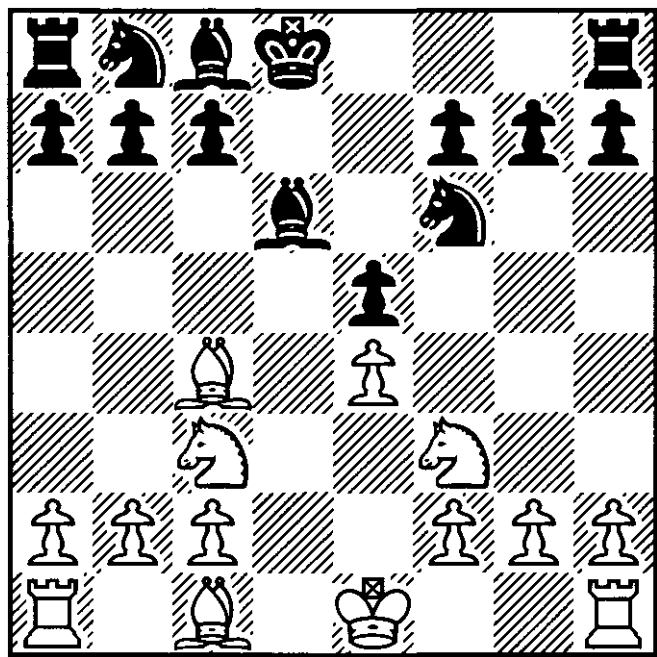
1 d4 d6 2 e4 Nf6 3 Nc3 e5 4 dxe5

Boris: If he played 4 Nf3 here we would have a Philidor. He was a 1 d4 player so I predicted he would not play 4 Nf3.

Joel: You would have been happy playing the Philidor? Isn't that a boring and not very dynamic defense to play? Also, in your game with Radjabov, you proved that exchanging queens on d8 gave White the initiative. Why would you permit your opponent to do the same?

Boris: I was not really prepared to play the Philidor but generally it is playable. I have played many openings and for me it is relatively easy to play different types of positions. My opponent, on the other hand, was very tied to his opening choices. Very often in chess we have to play the same type of positions with White and Black, but this position is a little different than my game with Radjabov.

4...dxe5 5 Qxd8+ Kxd8 6 Nf3 Bd6 7 Bc4



Exercise: What is the best way for Black to proceed? (difficulty level 4)

7...Be6!

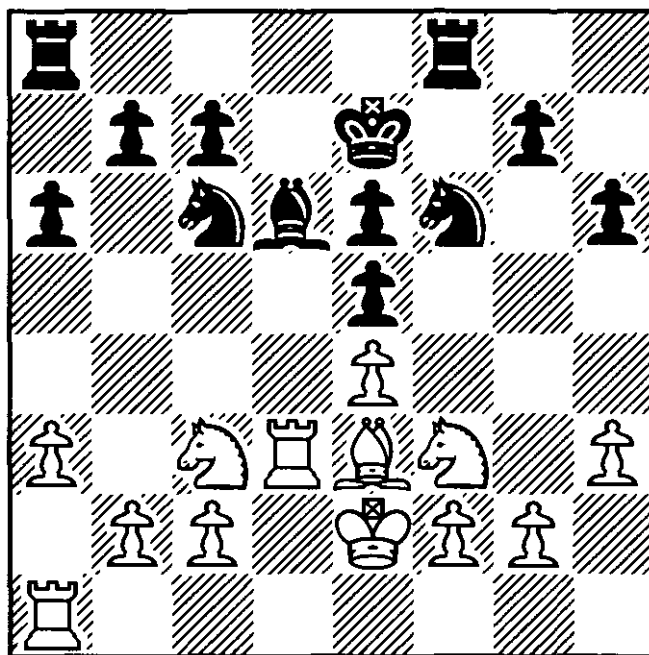
Boris: This position occurred in a game when I was White. I thought at the time: what would I do if he played ...Be6!. So I took the opportunity to play it myself (my opponent played something else in this position and I reached an advantage with two bishops; see B.Gulko-R.Cifuentes Parada, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990). The idea of 7...Be6 is to spoil my pawn structure but take control of all central squares and open the f-file.

Compared to my game with Radjabov, it is extremely difficult for White to find an object of attack in Black's camp. In the game with Radjabov, I was able to attack the e5-pawn by playing Geller's move b2-b3. Here it is not applicable.

8 Bxe6 fxe6 9 Be3 Nc6!

Boris: This is an important move. Now the knight on f3 has to guard the d4-square and the knight on c3 has to guard the e4-pawn. White's problem is that his knights are playing a purely defensive role and it is difficult to find a plan to improve the position of his knights without losing material.

10 a3 a6 11 Ke2 Ke7 12 Rhd1 h6 13 h3 Rhf8 14 Rd3



Exercise: What would you recommend to play as Black here? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Black's pawn structure is worse but the doubled pawns control key center squares. Black has access to f4 and d4 (although these squares are protected by the dark-squared bishop), whereas White has no access to the corresponding f5- and d5-squares in Black's camp. White's dark-squared bishop is very important and superior to Black's, which is playing a defensive role. Black's knight's have more potential than White's because the doubled e-pawns restrict their mobility. White plans to double rooks on the d-file but this can be contested by ...Rad8.

Boris: I agree with everything until now. White's plan is not to double on the d-file. There is no way to dislodge my bishop and break through. The d-file is closed. It also doesn't make sense for Black to exchange rooks because part of my compensation for the structural weaknesses is the activity of my rooks on the f-file.

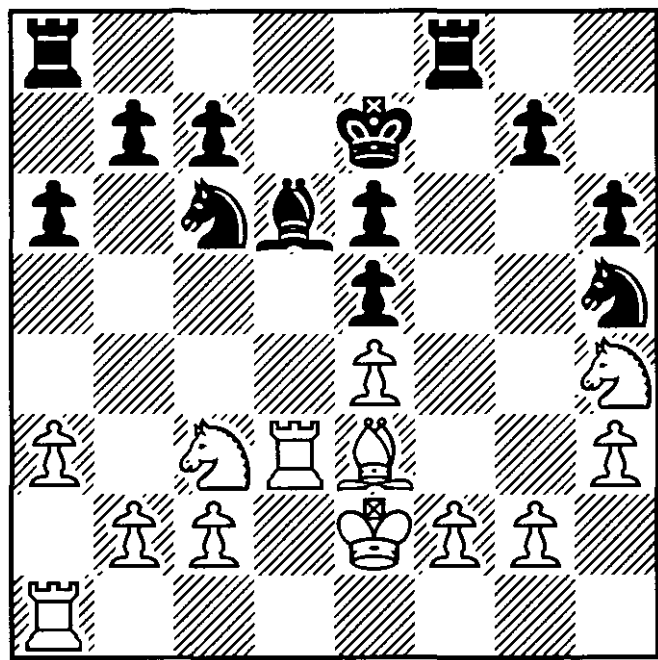
Joel: I see. Well, the other factor in the position is that Black has a semi-open f-file to work with and White has no such file. Therefore, Black's task is get rid of the dark-squared bishop and attack f2 with his rooks. As a result, I would play 14...Nh5 followed by 15...g5. However, if I played nothing at all, White might play Nh4 himself threatening Ng6+ winning the exchange, so it makes sense to cover the h4-square with 14...g5 first.

Boris: 14...g5 is risky because White would have the opportunity to play 15 h4. I played...

14...Nh5!?

...because I thought White had to reply 15 g3 (covering f4). After 15 g3, I would have returned with 15...Nf6! and his knight on f3 could become under-protected after doubling on the f-file. After 15 g3, if I tried to double on the f-file right away with 15...Rf6?, he could relocate his knight by playing 16 Nb1! and, after playing Nb1-d2, begin to get the upper hand by expanding on the queenside.

15 Nh4?



Exercise: How can Black take the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: This is why I recommended 14...g5 first; now White has the threat of 16 Ng6+ winning the exchange. The only reasonable means of preventing this threat is to play 15...Rf6, which covers g6 and prepares to double on the f-file.

Boris: I hoped he would play 15 Nh4. It was a trap and my response came as an unpleasant surprise. I think the psychological basis for his mistake is that Browne didn't like quiet play and, as a result, tried to turn the game into forced variations as soon as possible.

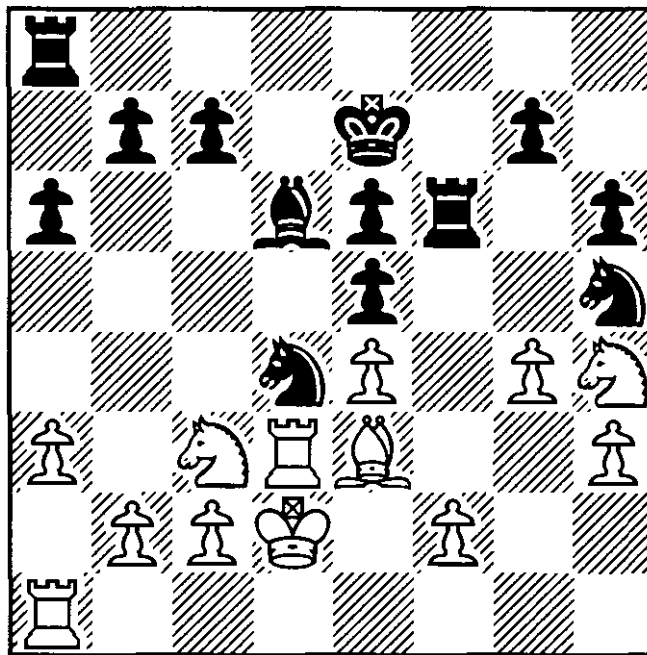
15...Nd4+!

Joel: Wow! Can he capture? If 16 Bxd4 exd4 17 Rxd4 Nf4+ followed by ...Be5 and Black's bishop becomes active, his knight controls g6, and White has lost his valuable defender of the f2-square.

Boris: No, if 16 Bxd4 then 16...Nf4+ 17 Kf1 Nxd3 18 Be3 Nxb2 19 Ng6+ Kd7 20 Nxf8+ Rxf8 21 Rb1 Nc4 and Black wins.

Joel: Right. So he can't capture on d4. If White retreats to the back rank then he disrupts the communication of his rooks. This leaves 16 Kd2. White is not worried about 16...Nf4 yet because that would lose a piece after 17 Bxf4 exf4 (the d4-knight hangs).

16 Kd2 Rf6 17 g4



Exercise: The knight on h5 is hanging. What would you do? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: Black cannot play 17...Nf4 because of 18 Bxf4 Rxf4 (18...exf4 hangs the knight on d4) 19 Ng6+ winning the exchange. Therefore, 17...g5 must be played.

Boris: Correct.

17...g5 18 Nf5+!

Boris: I said his best quality is playing forced variations and here he demonstrates his accuracy. He plays the best move! If 18 gxh5 gxh4, I would be much better because I have the f3-square for my rooks (attacking his pawns) or ...Rg8-g2. Anyway, this position is much more pleasant for Black.

18...exf5 19 gxh5 Ke6!

Boris: I avoid check and improve the position of my king.

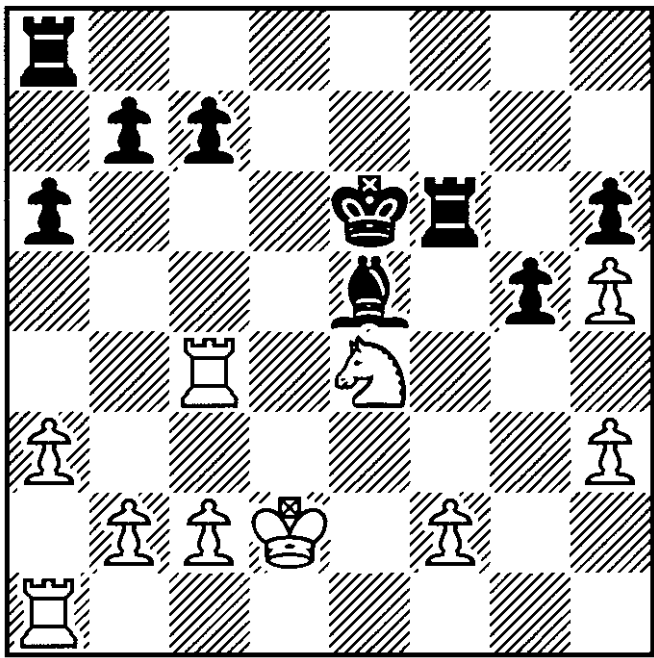
20 Bxd4 exd4 21 Rxd4

Boris: Now he has an extra pawn, but his pawns on the kingside are weak and my bishop is very good.

21...Be5 22 Rc4?!

Boris: There are a lot of possibilities and he is forced to choose. 22 Rd3 was better, protecting his third rank. Now it is under-protected and I use it at once. After 22 Rd3! Bxc3+ 23 Rxc3 fxe4 Black is better but White has drawing chances.

22...fxe4 23 Nxe4



Exercise: Where does Black need to place his rook? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: White's pawns look horribly weak on the kingside. Black has a bishop versus a knight on an open board with pawns on both sides (advantage bishop). White is threatening the rook as well as 24 Nc5+ followed by Nxb7 (although in this case the f2-pawn would become very weak and Black could activate his rook via the f-file). Also, Black is threatening 23...Bxb2 so it seems Black will regain his pawn this way or through activity on the kingside. So I would play 23...Rf3.

Boris: Hold on. After 24 Nc5+, Black has 24...Kd5 winning immediately so 24 Nc5+ is not a threat at all. Otherwise, your analysis of the position is correct.

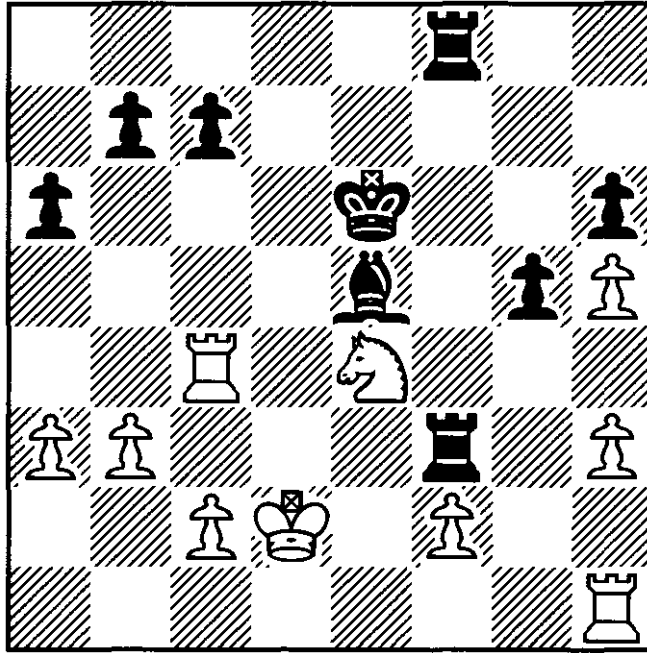
Joel: I seem to be analyzing strategy and plans fairly well but messing up in concrete variations.

Boris: Yes, sometimes. Chess is a combination of both tactics and strategy.

23...Rf3 24 Rh1!

Boris: The best defense. Bad was 24 Re1? Bf4+! 25 Ke2 Rxh3 and White's king closes the e-file.

24...Raf8 25 b3



Exercise: Black has an active position.

How does he develop the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White now threatens 26 Nc5+ and 27 Nxb7. However, in return, White would lose the f-pawn and Black, with his more active rooks, would probably win the game. I think it is safe to say that if White loses the f-pawn he will lose the game so, although 26 Nc5 comes with check, he will likely have to come back and defend anyway. There is no time for 27 Nxb7 (this is one of the reasons why bishops are superior to knights in this kind of position). Therefore, I would play 25...Bd6. If White responds with 26 Nxd6 then Black has the intermezzo 26...Rxf2+. The move 25...Bd6 also clears the way for the king to go to e5 attacking the knight.

Boris: His pieces are well placed but I can destroy the coordination of White's pieces with 25...b5!. Your mistake is that Black has the advantage because his pieces and king are more active and Black's bishop is better than White's knight. All of this is a dynamic advantage not a structural advantage. If you do not play actively you will lose the advantage (rule of Steinitz). Your move is not aggressive.

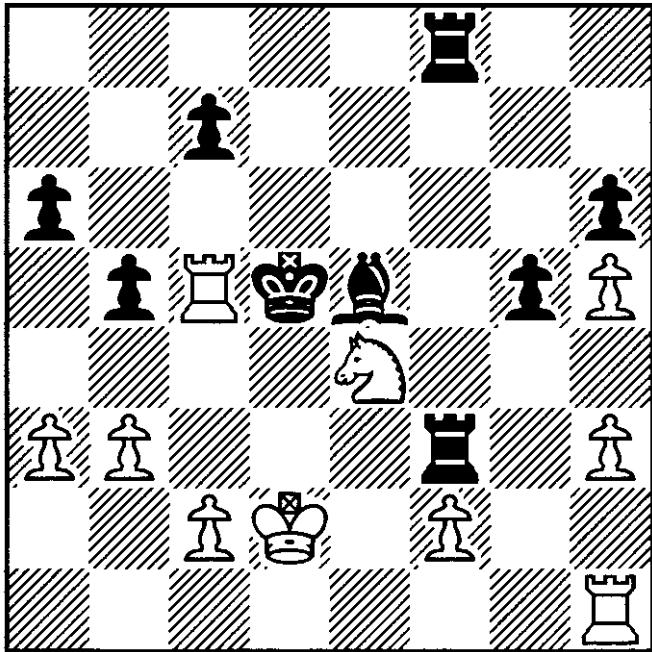
25...b5

Joel: I looked at this move but it seemed to lose after 26 Rc6+ and 27 Rxa6.

26 Rc6+

Boris: If 26 Rc5 then 26...Bd6 – exactly your move but now it is aggressive: it attacks the rook and your calculation comes into play.

26...Kd5 27 Rc5+



Exercise: Is there a decent alternative to 27...Kxe4 - ? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Why avoid 27...Kxe4 - ? It seems winning after 28 Re1+ Kf4 and Black will take the f-pawn with decisive entry on the kingside.

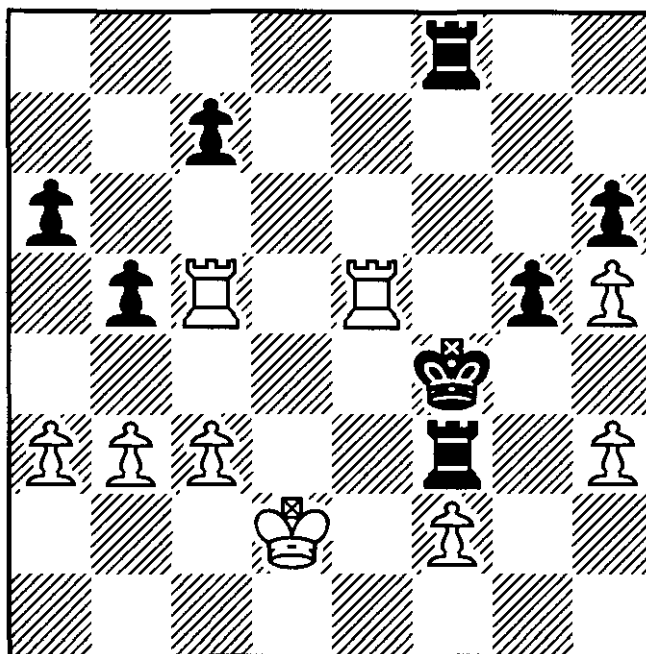
27...Kd4!?

Boris: I played this move, hoping for 28 c3+, because he was in time trouble and I wanted to make things sharp and complicated. I think your estimation of 27...Kxe4 is too optimistic. After 28 Re1+ Kf4 29 Rxe5 Rxh3 (your idea of 29...Rxf2+ allows 30 Re2 when Black is better but White has drawing chances) 30 Re6 Rxh5 31 Rxa6 there is equal material and it is not clear whether Black can win.

28 c3+?!

Boris: He had to play 28 Re1! Bf4+! (not 28...Rxf2+? 29 Kd1, threatening c2-c3+ and mate) 29 Kd1 Rd8! 30 c3+ Kd3 31 Rc6 Rd5 and the position is unclear.

28...Kxe4 29 Re1+ Kf4 30 Rxe5



Joel: Why this rook?

Boris: Because the other stays active on c5 attacking a pawn.

30...Rxf2+ 31 Re2 Rd8+?!

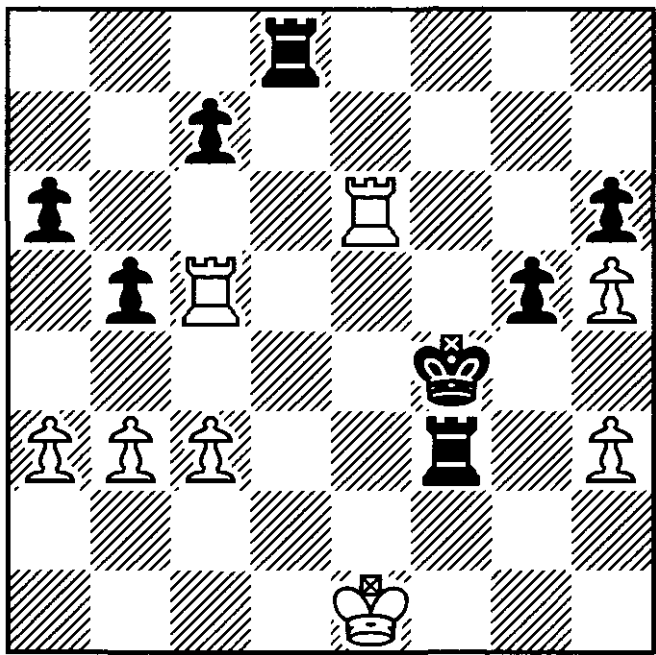
Boris: This is an interesting psychological moment. My opponent is in time shortage so I played a more complicated line, though there was a more straightforward way.

Joel: When you say time shortage what do you mean?

Boris: He had 3 or 4 minutes compared to my 20 minutes. 31...Rd8 is also winning but I wanted to cash in on my time advantage (I thought it was a pity not to). In general, it is better to take the simpler path. Simpler was 31...Kg3! 32 Rc6 Kxh3 33 Rxh6 g4 and Black is winning.

32 Ke1 Rf3 33 Re6

Boris: 33 Rxc7!? would not have helped much because of 33...Rxh3 34 Rc6 g4 35 Rf6+ Kg3, threatening ...Rh1 mate.



Exercise: What is the simplest way for Black to keep his advantage?
(difficulty level 2)

Joel: I would play 33...Rxh3 34 Rxh6 Rh1+ 35 Ke2 Rh2+ 36 Ke1 Rdd2 and Black is winning.

Boris: I can tell you 33...Rxh3 is not worse but my way is simpler. I will use my advice from the previous note now: it is better to take the simpler path.

33...Rd6!

Joel: What is the rationale behind this move? Is it that it gives Black an extra tempo?

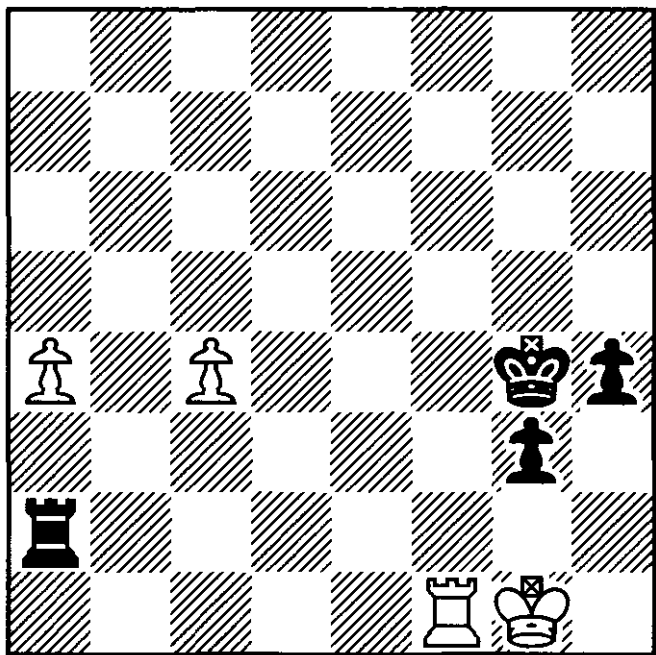
Boris: Now I have time to win both of his h-pawns, eliminate his counterplay, and turn the position into technical win.

34 Rxd6 cxd6 35 Rc6 Rxh3 36 Rxd6 Rxh5 37 Rxa6 g4 38 a4 bxa4 39 bxa4

Boris: Or 39 Rxa4+ Kf3 40 Ra8 Rh1+ 41 Kd2 g3 and my pawn is unstoppable.

39...g3 40 Kf1 Rh1+ 41 Kg2 Rh2+ 42 Kg1 h5 43 Rf6+ Kg4 44 Rf1 Ra2 45 c4 h4 0-1

Boris: White cannot stop the plan of ...h3-h2+, ...Kh3 and ...g2 mate.



Joel: What have I learned from this game? Well, I think for myself, I am discovering that my understanding of positional chess strategy and plans is not bad. I often am on the right track but I seem to falter in positions that require concrete calculations. There was also the recurring theme of playing actively when you have a dynamic advantage. I think that it is really difficult for me to find moves that keep the initiative in such situations. Would you say that this is one your great strengths as a chess player?

Boris: Maybe. What I think this game shows is that doubled pawns in the center can be very useful if the opponent does not have the opportunity to put direct pressure on them. They are useful because they cover many squares and provide open files for rooks. I think another important point is how to make use of an opponent's time shortage. If you have more time, it is good to play something unexpected (e.g. 27...Kd4) to complicate the position, when he doesn't have time to re-evaluate the position.

Game Three
A.Miles-B.Gulko
Philadelphia World Open 1987
Torre Attack

Boris: This was my first World Open. We were meeting in round 5 when we both had 4 wins after 4 games. This was an important game. It was my first year in the US and my first game against Miles. Incidentally, although we tied for first, I also won the tiebreak game against him which gave me the World Open title. It is not so often you beat the same person twice in a Swiss tournament.

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3

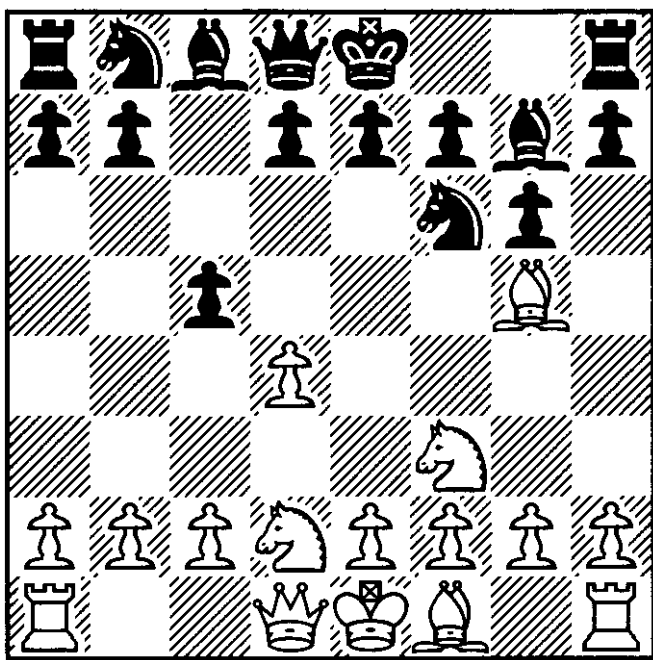
Joel: White is happy to play a queen's pawn game?

Boris: I was a Grünfeld player in those years so Miles played a quieter opening to avoid the Grünfeld.

2...g6 3 Bg5

Boris: This is a very quiet approach to avoid sharp and forced lines in the Grünfeld.

3...Bg7 4 Nbd2 c5



Boris: This move was played by Fischer and Geller. It is important to play it before

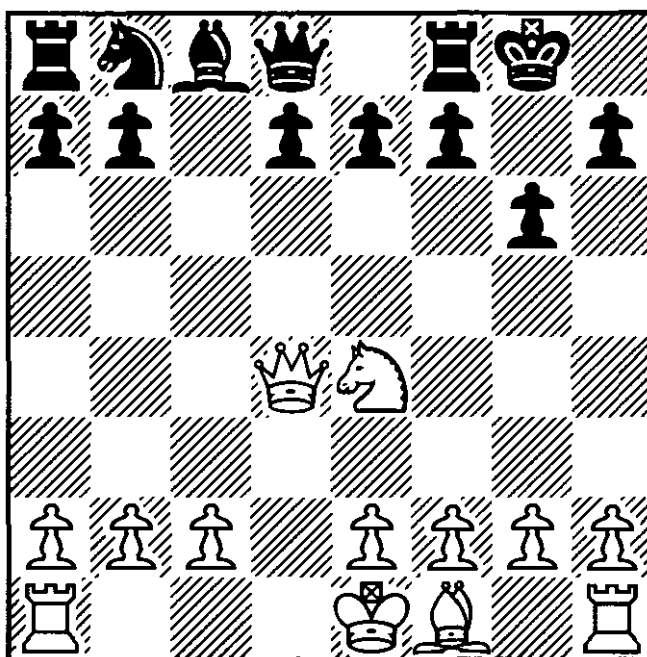
castling. For example, 4...0-0 5 c3 d6 6 e4 c5 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 Be2 is preferable to White. Bronstein won a couple of nice games in this position. This is why Black must play ...c7-c5 right away because the other way White forces Black to take back with the pawn. The relative drawback of 4...c5 is that it allows White to exchange the dark-squared bishop.

5 Bxf6

Joel: What about 5 dxc5 - ?

Boris: The move 5 dxc5 was tried and after 5...Qa5 6 c3 Qxc5 7 Bxf6 Bxf6 8 Ne4 Qb6 9 Nxf6+ Qxf6 10 Qd4 led to a draw in V.Topalov-B.Gulko, Seville 1992.

5...Bxf6 6 Ne4 Bxd4 7 Nxd4 cxd4 8 Qxd4 0-0



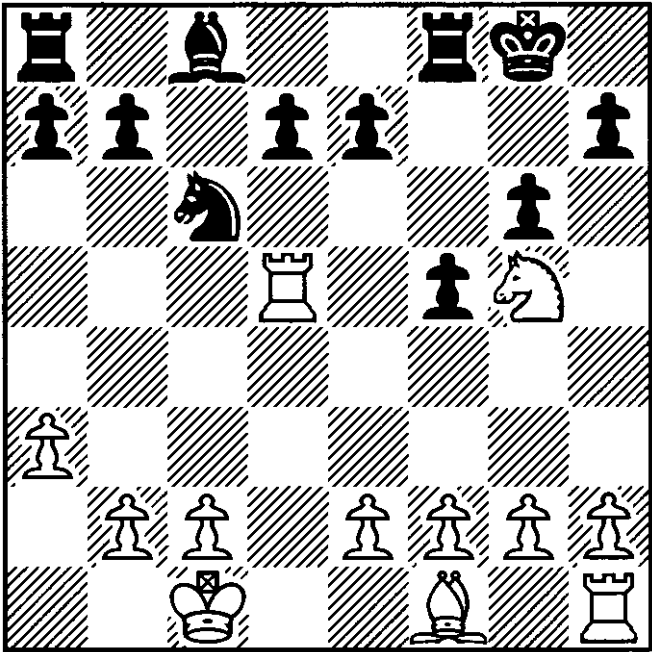
Joel: That sequence was more or less forced but now Black can gain time attacking the queen with ...Nb8-c6 and then hit the knight with ...d7-d5.

Boris: ...d7-d5 would be impossible after almost any of White's moves because White will control the d5-square.

9 Nc3

Boris: He wants to eventually go to d5 with the knight. After 9 c4 (with idea of playing Nc3 and Nd5) 9...Qa5+ 10 Qc3 Nc6 11 e3 d6 12 Qxa5 Nxa5 13 b3 led to a draw in V.Smyslov-B.Gulko, Rome 1988. Instead, 9 0-0-0 was played against me by Zurab Sturua at Pavlodar 1991, which I answered with 9...Qa5! (9...Nc6 10 Qd2 Qa5 11 Nc3 keeps the queens on, which is why ...Qa5 first is more precise) 10 a3 Nc6 11

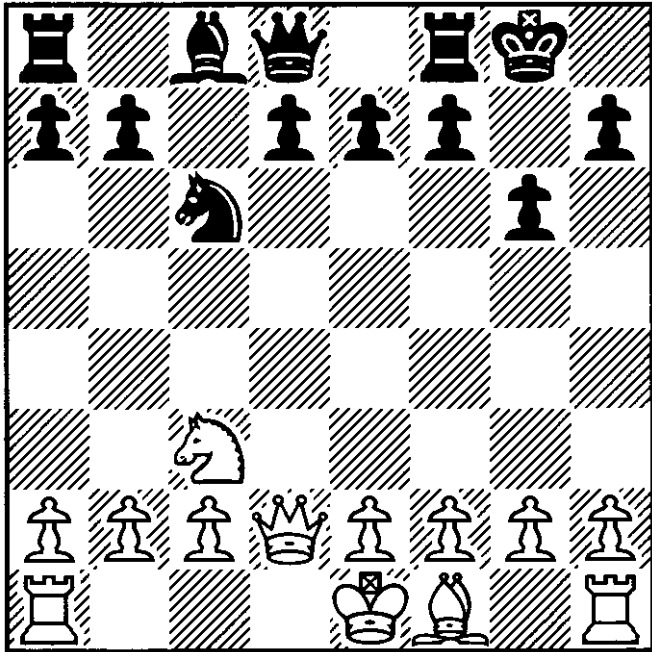
Qd5 Qxd5 12 Rxd5 f5 13 Ng5.



Exercise: How can Black fight for the initiative? (difficulty level 2)

Boris: White has to develop his f1-bishop so 13...f4! creates problems. Now, it is uncomfortable for White to play either e2-e3 or g2-g3: 14 g3 fxg3 15 fxg3, or 14 e3 fxe3 15 fxe3.

9...Nc6 10 Qd2



Exercise: What is Black's best move and best plan? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White plans to castle long. Black needs to come up with a plan that activates his bishop, which can't move, and that threatens the safety of White's king should he castle long. He must also determine how to play in the center. He doesn't want to put all his pawns on light squares either (e.g. ...a7-a6 and ...b7-b5). Rather, he wants to put pawns on dark squares (the color of the bishop that has left the board) and reserve a queenside pawn storm should White castle long. Therefore, I would play 10...d6.

Boris: You're right that White's plan is to castle long and to attack on the kingside by pushing the h-pawn. However, Black has an opportunity to prevent this plan by initiating the exchange of queens, which will dampen the kingside attack. Afterward, I will have a Sicilian structure with as usual good chances in the endgame (we will return to this idea later). After the exchange of queens, Black no longer has to worry about getting mated in the middlegame.

10...Qb6

Boris: Hitting b2 and f2. This prevents White from castling long and prepares ...Qd4 exchanging queens. If 10...d6 then 11 O-O-O Be6 12 h4 and Black's position is vulnerable. Black is happy to prevent this dangerous attack.

11 Rb1

Joel: Why not something simple like 11 b3 - ? There is no dark-squared bishop that might make this move dangerous.

Boris: White doesn't want to place his pawns on the same color as his bishop. Plus the game move might support a queenside pawn storm with the rook better placed on b1 than a1. Generally, there is not much difference between the two moves but 11 Rb1 allows more opportunity.

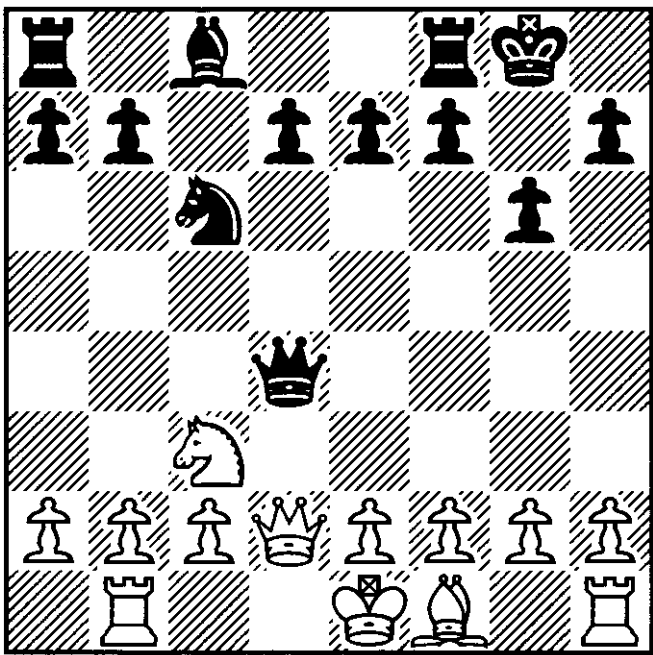
Joel: Now White cannot castle long. I like the plan of 11...d6, ...Be6, ...Rfc8, with play on the queenside.

11...Qd4!

Boris: The move you offered is inferior because of 11...d6 12 Nd5 Qd8 13 h4 and Black has simply lost time.

Joel: Wow! I didn't anticipate that you would offer an exchange queens. Can White ignore this and play 12 e4 - ?

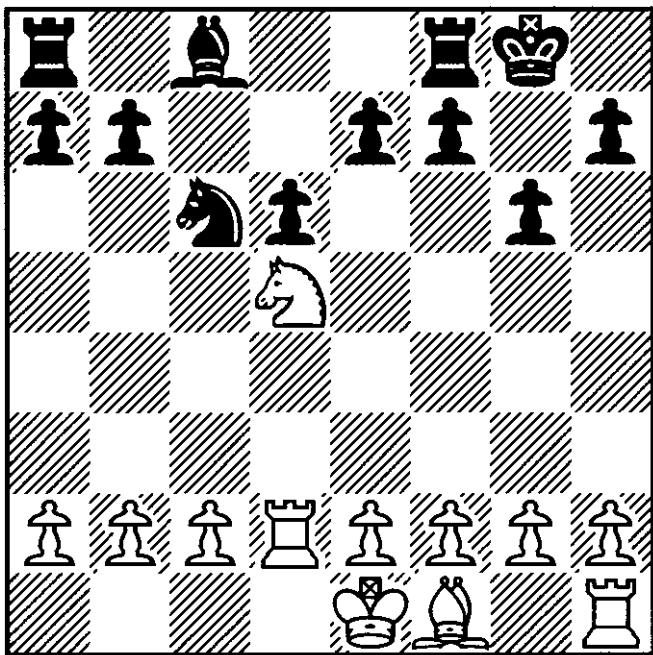
Boris: No, there are too many pieces on the board and the king will not be safe on d2 after the exchange of queens. Moreover, the rook on d2 is more reasonable than on b1.



12 Rd1 Qxd2+ 13 Rxd2 d6 14 Nd5?!

Joel: A nice move which prevents 14...Be6 because of 15 Nc7 and Nxe6 crippling Black's pawns.

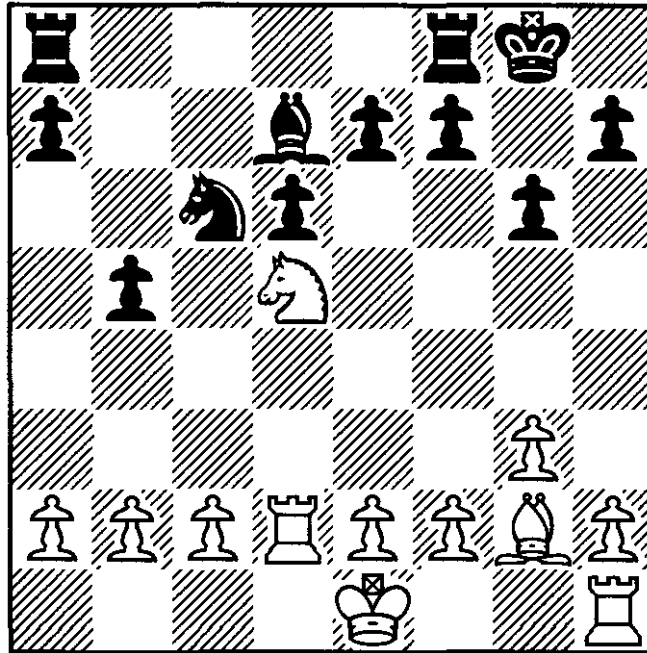
Boris: I would not be afraid of this. It does not offer any advantage to White. Now arises a typical Sicilian endgame. Because of the semi-open c-file, Black has good chances for playing on the queenside, whereas it is difficult for White to find a creative plan.



Exercise: Find the best move for Black. (difficulty level 2)

Boris: It was better for Miles to play 14 e4, not losing control of the b5-square. After the game continuation, I can take space on the queenside immediately. Miles offered me a draw around this point in the game but I declined because I felt I was already better.

14...b5! 15 g3 Bd7 16 Bg2



Exercise: Find the best move for Black. (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Black needs to get the rook off the long diagonal and put it on the half-open c-file (16...Rac8).

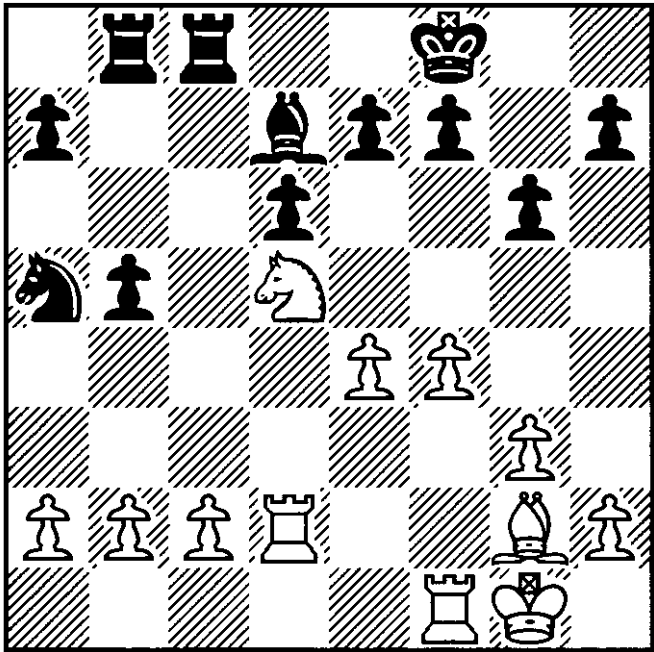
Boris: You're right, Black has to move the rook from a8, but 16...Rac8 would be a serious mistake. Black's plan is to play on the queenside and he needs both rooks present on that side of the board. If 16...Rac8, then the rook on f8 would not have room to move.

16...Rab8! 17 O-O Rfc8 18 f4 Kf8 19 e4 Na5

Joel: I anticipated 19...a5, because if 19...Na5 then 20 b3 would prevent the knight from going anywhere. But I guess the move 20 b3? would leave White's c-pawn backward and horribly weak.

Boris: What is the purpose of 19...a5 - ? It deprives the knight of the valuable a5-square from where it could jump to c4. First you must improve the placement of your pieces then your pawns. With 18 f4, my opponent took away the e5-square, and if I played 19...a5, I would prevent my knight from getting to c4. After 19...Na5,

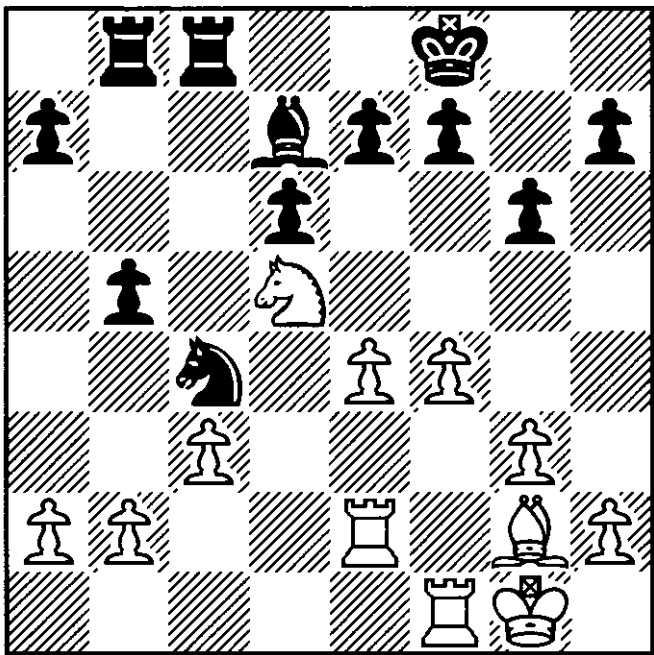
Black threatens to play ...Nc4 winning a pawn. Only after White plays c2-c3 (to protect the b2-pawn) would Black play ...a7-a5 followed by ...b5-b4. The c4-square is very sensitive for White in Sicilian endgames.



20 c3

Boris: More prudent was 20 Ne3 Nc4 21 Nxc4 bxc4 22 c3 and White has reasonable chances to reach a draw.

20...Nc4 21 Re2



Exercise: What is Black's best move and why? (difficulty level 3)

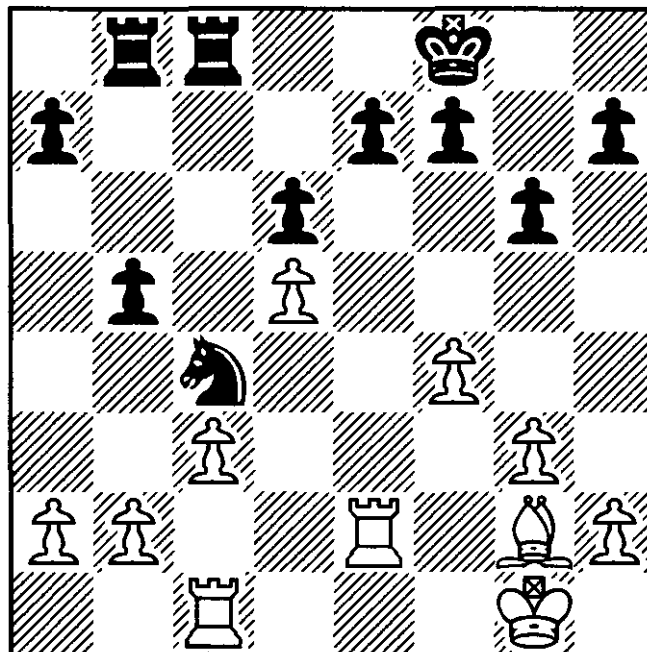
Joel: I was thinking about 21...Bg4, attacking the rook, or 21...a5, getting on with the minority attack.

Boris: Which piece is White's best? Of course the knight on d5 is White's best piece. Therefore, Black plays 21...Be6 preparing to exchange it. I also don't have an active role for my bishop. Finally, after the exchange on d5 and e4xd5, White's bishop will become bad.

21...Be6 22 Rc1

Boris: The alternative was 22 Ne3 Nxe3 23 Rxe3 b4 (or 23...Bxa2 24 Ra1 Bc4 25 Rxa7 Ra8 26 Rxa8 Rxa8 and Black is better) 24 cxb4 Rxb4 25 b3 a5 and Black has a clear initiative. Both 22 e5 dxe5 23 fxe5 Rc5 and 22 f5 Bxd5 23 exd5 Ne5 were bad.

22...Bxd5 23 exd5



Exercise: White wants to play 24 b3. Can you find a prophylactic move that makes it unattractive? (difficulty level 3)

23...Rc5! 24 Kf2

Boris: If 24 b3, then 24...Nb6 25 Rd2 Rbc8 and the c3-pawn is weak.

24...a5

Boris: Only now. Black cannot improve the position of his pieces. Therefore, he looks for pawn breaks.

25 Rec2 Nb6

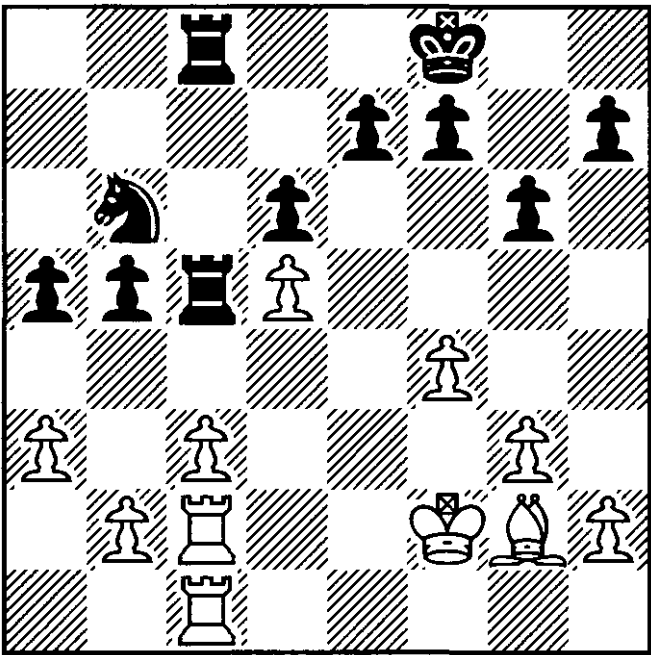
Boris: With this Black combines two plans: 1) attacking d5, and 2) preparing ...b4.

26 a3

Boris: This move stops both of Black's threats tactically.

26...Rbc8

Boris: 26...Nxd5? was bad for Black because of the reply 27 b4.



Exercise: How does White have to handle this position? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I would play 27 Rd1 trying to hold onto to d5.

Boris: So you support Miles' decision, but it leads to a strategically losing position as we will see.

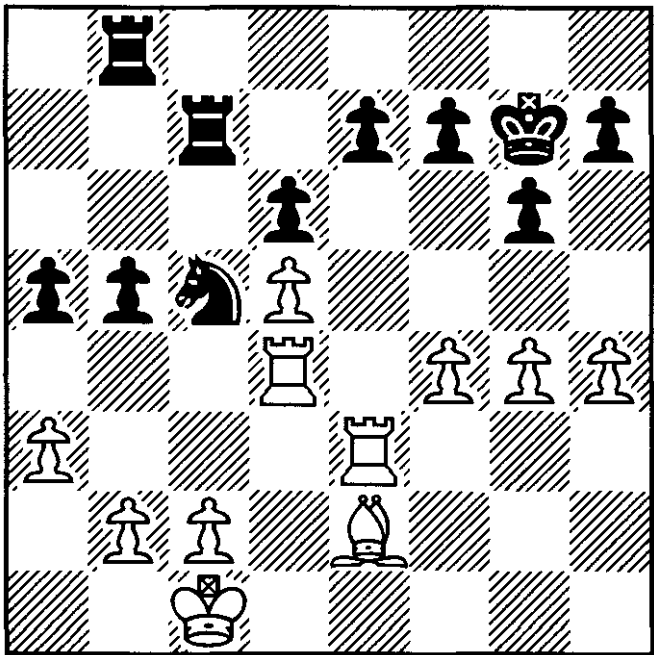
27 Rd1?

Boris: It was necessary to play 27 b4! axb4 28 axb4 R5c7 29 Ke2 Ra7 when Black is generally better, but with best play White has chances to escape. What is really strange is that in Karpov-Miles (1982) they reached a similar position and Karpov played the correct move b2-b4!, got active counterplay, and even won. One of the most important things you can do in chess is learn from your losses, which I learned from Capablanca's *Chess Fundamentals*.

A.Karpov-A.Miles, London 1982

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 O-O 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 g4 Be6 10.O-O-O Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Qa5 12 a3 Rab8 13 h4 Rfc8 14 Nd5 Qxd2+ 15 Rxd2 Bxd5

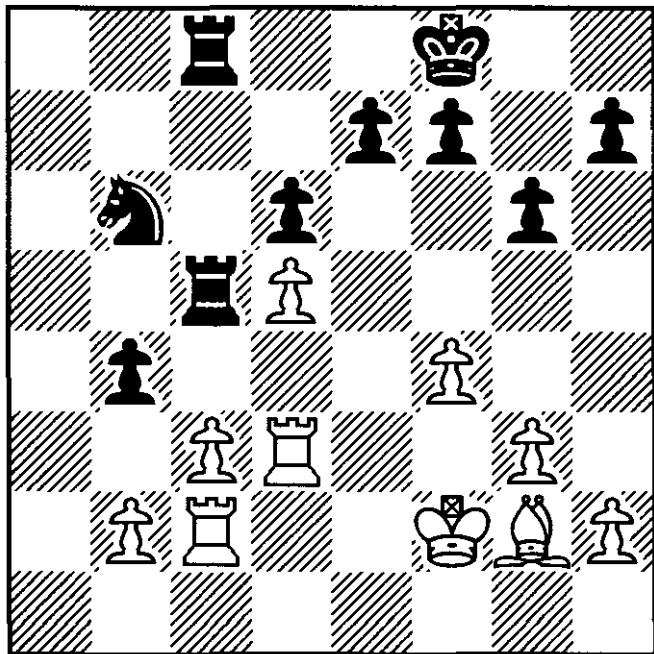
16 exd5 a6 17 Be2 Nd7 18 f4 Nc5 19 Rh3 Rc7 20 Re3 b5 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Rd4 a5



23 b4! Na4 24 bxa5 Nc3 25 Bf1 Kf8 26 Kb2 Rbc8 27 Kb3 Rc5 28 a6 Nxd5 29 Rxd5 Rxd5 30 Rc3 Rd8 31 Rc7 Rd1 32 Bxb5 e5 33 a7 exf4 34 Rb7 Rb1+ 35 Ka4 Rxb5 36 Rxb5 f3 37 Rb8 f2 38 Rxd8+ 1-0

So it seems that Miles did not analyze deeply the games he lost, because he could have employed the same strategy.

27...b4! 28 axb4 axb4 29 Rd3



Exercise: How should Black proceed? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Taking the pawn is no good: 29...bxc3 30 Rxc3 when, because of the pin, Black must exchange rooks and White has a defendable position. 29...Na4 puts more pressure on c3. White cannot push the pawn and Black is threatening 30...bxc3 followed by 31...Nxc3 winning.

Boris: Sometimes it is very hard to switch to another plan. Here, because White is tied to defending c3, Black can switch plans and penetrate on the a-file.

29...Ra5

Boris: The move you offered doesn't work because 29...Na4? will be met by 30 Rd4 and Black loses his advantage.

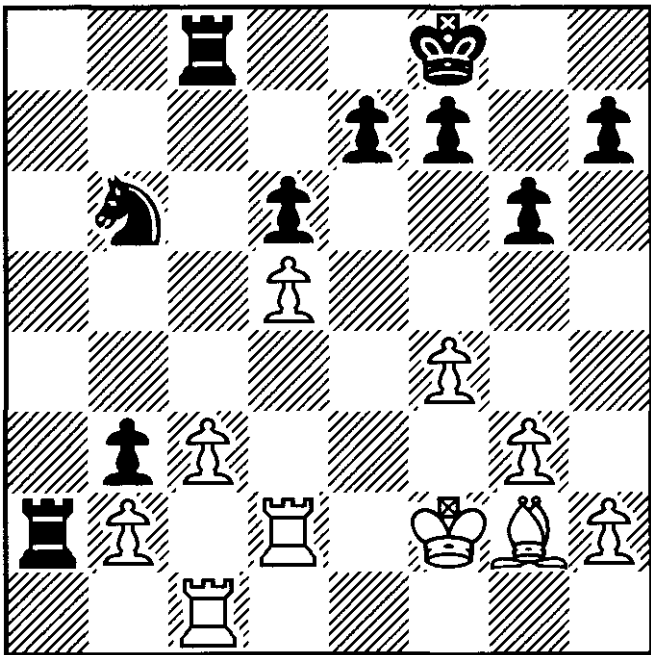
30 Rdd2

Joel: Now Black will create another weakness after executing the plan of ...b4-b3, ...Ra2, and ...Na4.

Boris: Yes, that's the correct plan. More stubborn was 30 Rd4 b3 31 Re2 Nc4 32 Rd1 and White can defend, although Black has a significant advantage.

30...b3 31 Rc1 Ra2

Boris: The tempo-gaining move 31...Nc4 was worse because White has 32 Re2. If you plan to play two moves and don't know in which order to play them, start with the move you will play no matter what. The rook only has the a2-square but the knight can go to two squares (a4 or c4). Therefore, 31...Ra2 is more accurate.



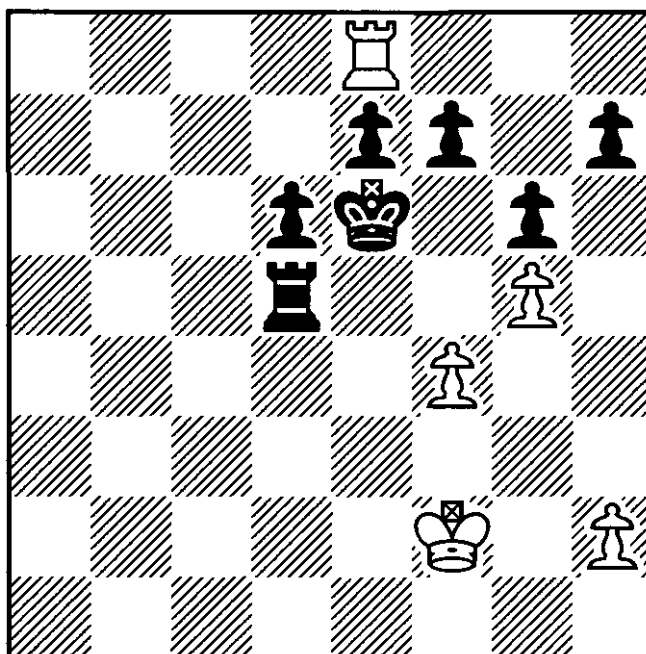
32 Bf1

Boris: The bishop prevents 32...Nc4 but not 32...Na4. 32 Re2 permits 32...Na4 33 Rb1 Rxc3! 34 bxc3 Rxe2+ 35 Kxe2 Nxc3+ winning two pawns.

32...Na4 33 Ke1 Rxb2 34 Rxb2 Nxb2 35 Rb1 Na4 36 Rxb3 Nxc3 37 Bg2 Rc5 38 Rb8+ Kg7 39 Re8 Kf6 40 g4 Nxd5 41 g5+ Ke6

Boris: In the game, Miles moved the bishop to h3 and jokingly said “Mate”, but kept his hand on the bishop. When I calculated this variation, which wins a second pawn, I also hallucinated this “mate” before realizing I had ...f7-f5!

42 Bxd5+ Rxd5 43 Kf2



Exercise: White has counterplay against the h-pawn.
How to extinguish it? (difficulty level 2)

43...h6! 44 gxh6 Rh5 45 Rh8 Rxh2+ 46 Kg3 Rh1 47 Kg2 Rh5 48 Kf3 Kf6 0-1

Joel: Well, obviously, the rule that sticks is the importance of studying your games. I have been told this many times, but to see the consequences of not following this advice in a GM like Tony Miles is interesting.

Boris: In addition, this game illustrates a couple of more rules. First, the importance of improving the position of your pieces and, only after, looking for pawn breaks. Second, the importance of maintaining the flexibility for your pieces when executing your plan. If you maintain flexibility, you can switch plans more easily.

Game Four
M.Taimanov-B.Gulko
USSR Championship, Moscow 1976
Torre Attack

Boris: This was the first round of an extremely strong championship of the USSR, featuring Karpov, Polugaevsky, Smyslov, Petrosian, Vaganian, Tal and others.

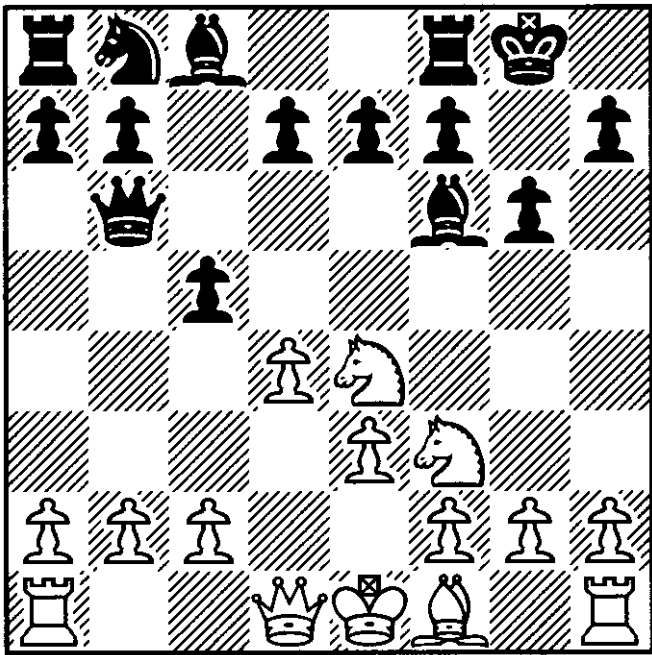
Joel: Wow! That’s amazing. You won the following year in 1977, right?

Boris: Yes, I played good in this tournament too, but I got sick and didn’t play well in the end.

Joel: Did you appreciate at the time that you were playing in a tournament with players of such historical significance?

Boris: Yes, it was very interesting. Taimanov was a leading player but he was at the end of his career and this was his last USSR championship. I think he held the record for playing in more USSR championships than anyone else. His advantage and disadvantage simultaneously was his optimism. Sometimes he overestimated his position and in this game I was able to exploit this as a drawback.

1 Nf3 g6 2 d4 Nf6 3 Bg5 Bg7 4 Nbd2 c5 5 e3 0-0 6 Bxf6 Bxf6 7 Ne4 Qb6!

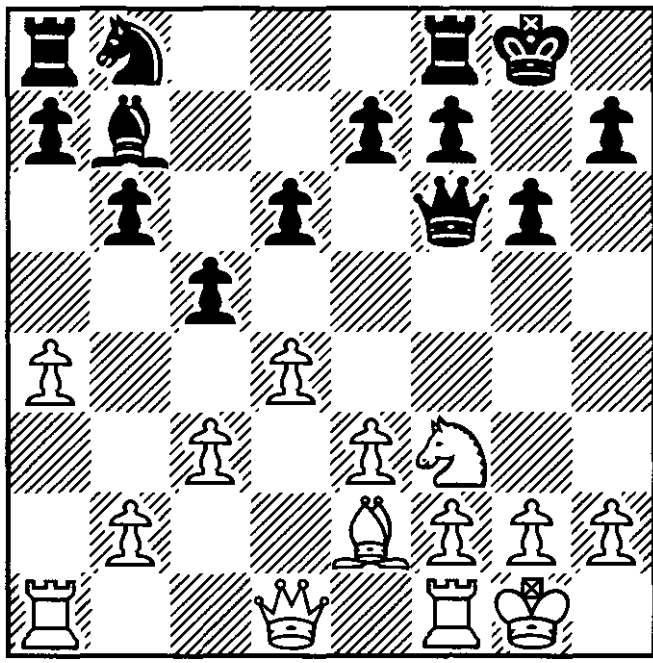


Joel: This is the only move that allows Black to have a decent game.

8 Nxf6+ Qxf6 9 c3 d6 10 Be2 b6!

Joel: In this structure I know that my bishop belongs on b7 and, therefore, I play the move 10...b6. At this point, I don't know where my knight belongs. In general, as we discussed in Game Three (Miles-Gulko), it is better to retain flexibility and to play moves you know you will play anyway.

11 0-0 Bb7 12 a4



Exercise: What is the best way for Black to play here? (difficulty level 3)

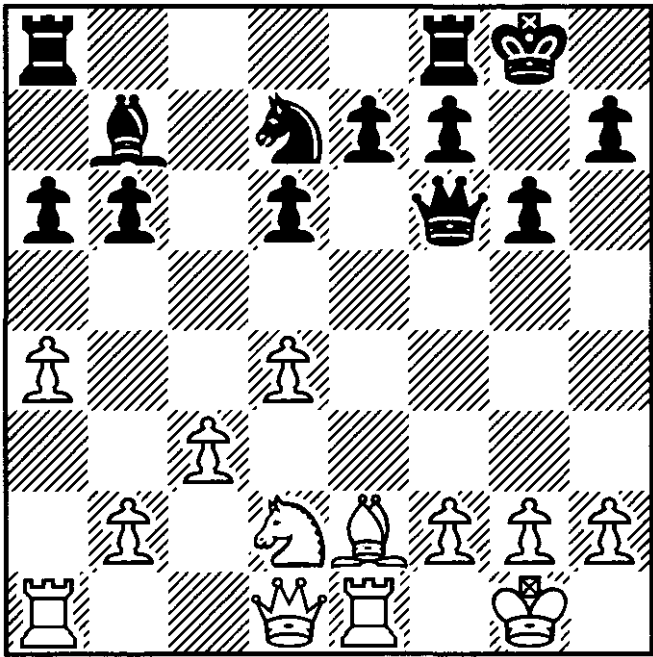
Joel: Material is even and Black has control of the e4-square, which White will try to get control of by following the plan of playing his rook to e1, Nf3-d2, Qd1-c2, and Be2-d3 if necessary. White has more space, especially on the queenside where he has just played a2-a4 (I believe this serves to stop Black's counterplay on this side of the board so that when White returns to the plan of playing e3-e4 Black will not have counterplay). Neither side has an advantage in development. Minor pieces are even, although Black controls the important a8-h1 diagonal. What will White do if Black does nothing? If Black does nothing, White will play 13 a5. This would give Black an isolated a-pawn if he exchanges. If Black doesn't plan on exchanging, then he must develop the knight. However, if Black develops the knight (say to d7), White can attack the bishop with a5-a6. If Black develops the knight to c6, White can play d4-d5 gaining space. Therefore, I guess in this position I would play 12...a6.

Boris: You are correct that White plans to advance his a-pawn, but his plan is not to play e3-e4 because his center will become shaky. White is happy to have a solid position in the center and attack on the queenside with a4-a5. It is not so easy to prevent White's plan. If 12...Nbd7, White can play 13 a5, and 12...a6 immediately allows White to attack the b6-pawn with Nf3-d2-c4. If immediately 12...Nc6, 13 d5 would be good as you suggested. But now it is a very appropriate moment to take on d4 because if White takes with a piece, Black will take over the center with ...e7-e5. If he takes with the c-pawn, Black can play 13...Nc6 and White's b4- and a5-squares are weak. So White is practically forced to take with the e-pawn, which allows me to play on the queenside, preparing a minority attack. From this moment on, Black has chances for the initiative.

12...cxd4! 13 exd4

Boris: As I said, if 13 cxd4 then 13...Nc6, using both the a5- and b4-squares.

13...a6! 14 Re1 Nd7 15 Nd2!

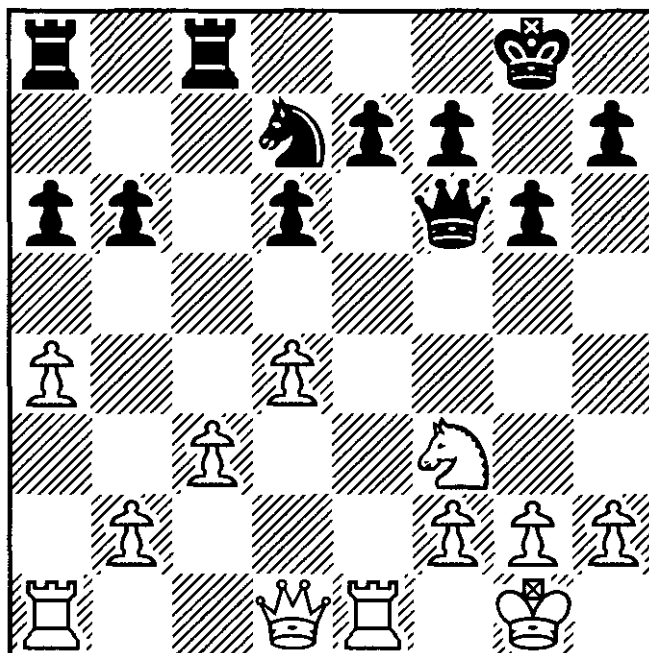


Exercise: Which rook should go to c8? (difficulty level 1)

15...Rfc8!

Boris: My plan is to play on the queenside with ...b6-b5 so I need both rooks on that side of the board.

16 Bf3 Bxf3 17 Nxf3



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 2)

17...e6!

Boris: This is a necessary prophylactic. If I didn't play ...e7-e6, White would play d4-d5 and Nd4-c6. Of course, I could have prevented this with 17...d5?, but that would give White's knight the e5-square.

18 Qd2 Kg7!

Boris: Now the psychological struggle starts. The position is equal. There is a small chance for Black to play on the queenside with ...b6-b5, but in this position it doesn't promise much because White can exchange and play Qb3. I started to make defensive moves to give the impression that I was on the defensive. Taimanov, because of his optimism, plays a couple of active-looking moves but they weaken his position.

19 h4 h6!

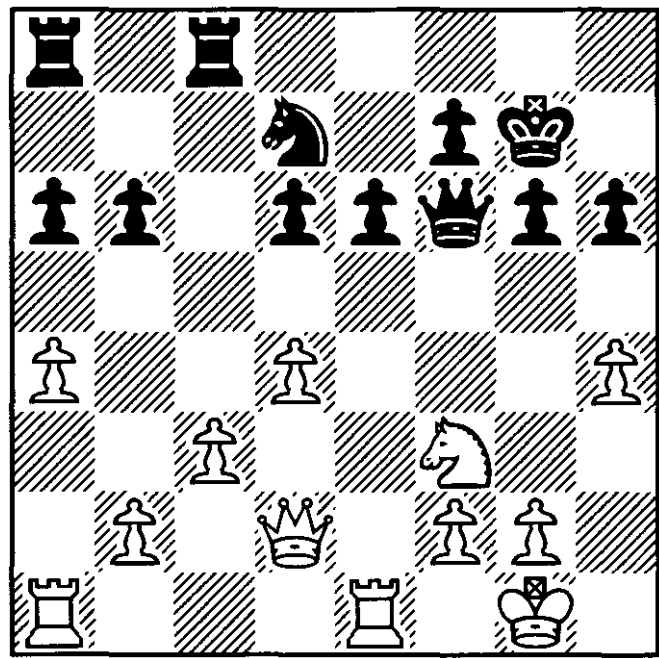
Joel: Why did you give this an exclamation point?

Boris: I continue my psychological battle. I am defending against threats that don't exist to give the opponent the impression that he has the advantage.

Joel: But 19...h6 seems very natural. You neutralize the threat of h4-h5.

Boris: But h4-h5 is not a real threat! I could just take the h-pawn if I wanted to. However, I defend against h4-h5 anyway. If Black is on "defense", White must be

on “attack”. Because of this impression, White played an unfortunate “active” move.



20 Re4?

Boris: 20 Qd3 was better, though after 20...Qf5 Black has a good position.

20...b5!

Boris: Now I start my counterplay. If I played ...b6-b5 earlier, he had Qd3. Now if he plays 21 Qd3, I could play 21...Qf5 and his position is awkward because of the unfortunate position of the rook on e4.

21 Ree1

Boris: He realizes his mistake immediately.

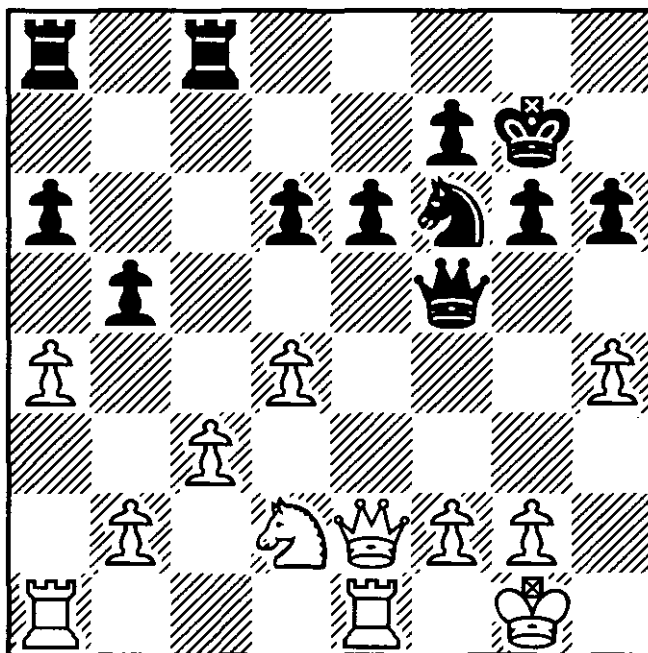
21...Qf5

Boris: I take control of the light squares and show that his move h2-h4 was weakening (because it created a weakness on g4).

22 Qe2 Nf6

Boris: The knight would be worse on b6: 22...Nb6?! 23 axb5 axb5 24 Nd2 Qc2 25 Qxb5 and the knight is hanging.

23 Nd2



Exercise: How does Black proceed? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I like 23...Qc2 hitting b2 and a4. Black is stronger on the queenside and the kingside is secure. Black is better.

Boris: Correct. And this move also helps me exchange queens.

Joel: Why is this good?

Boris: Because a minority attack is more dangerous in the endgame than in the middlegame.

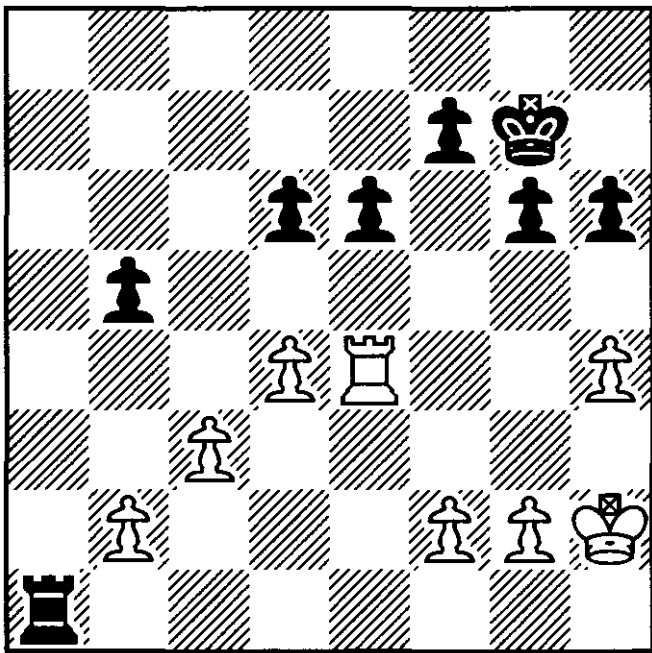
23...Qc2! 24 axb5

Boris: He has to play this because in the case of the immediate 24 Ne4, then 24...Qxe4 25 Qxe4 Nxe4 26 Rxe4 b4! 27 cxb4 Rc4 and Black has a winning rook endgame.

24...axb5 25 Rxa8 Rxa8 26 Ne4 Qxe2 27 Rxe2 Ra1+

Boris: Here I push his king away from the center.

28 Kh2 Nxe4 29 Rxe4



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: This looks to me like a draw. It is an even rook and pawn ending. Many of these positions are drawn even when one side is up a pawn. Are you trying to push your opponent into a mistake? Did you think you were a better endgame player? It seems to me that after Re4-e2, White protects his pawns from the side.

Boris: I exchange pieces I don't need and get rid of pieces he needs for counterplay. In this position Black actually has a big advantage. I can create several weaknesses in his camp and have opportunity to increase the pressure. In general, this position is very difficult for White. Rook endgame rules are relative, as are all rules in chess.

29...d5!

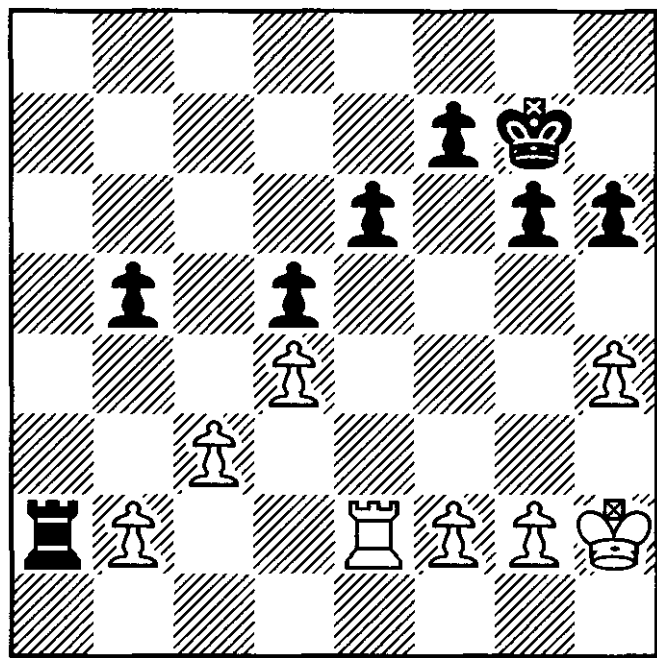
Boris: Black has to be careful. If 29...Ra2 then 30 d5! and White's rook will go to b4, protecting b2 and attacking b5.

30 Re3

Boris: In the case of your suggestion 30 Re2?, then 30...b4! 31 cxb4 Rd1 and Black is simply winning.

30...Ra2 31 Re2

Boris: Forced because of my check on move 27. Without this check he could play b2-b4 with a drawish position.

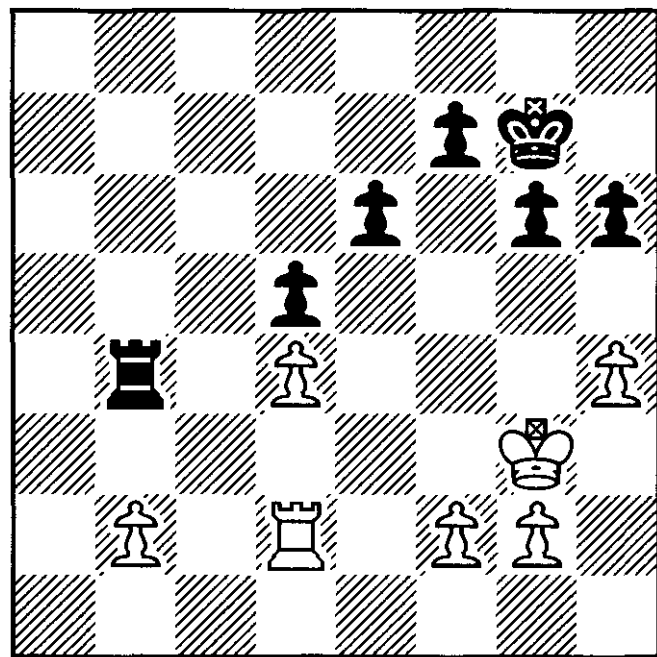


Exercise: How does Black proceed? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I like 31...b4 because it will create a number of weak pawns to attack.

Boris: Yes, I finally get to realize my plan that I started on move 12!

31...b4! 32 cxb4 Ra4 33 Rd2 Rxb4 34 Kg3



Exercise: What is the best way for Black to play here? (difficulty level 4)

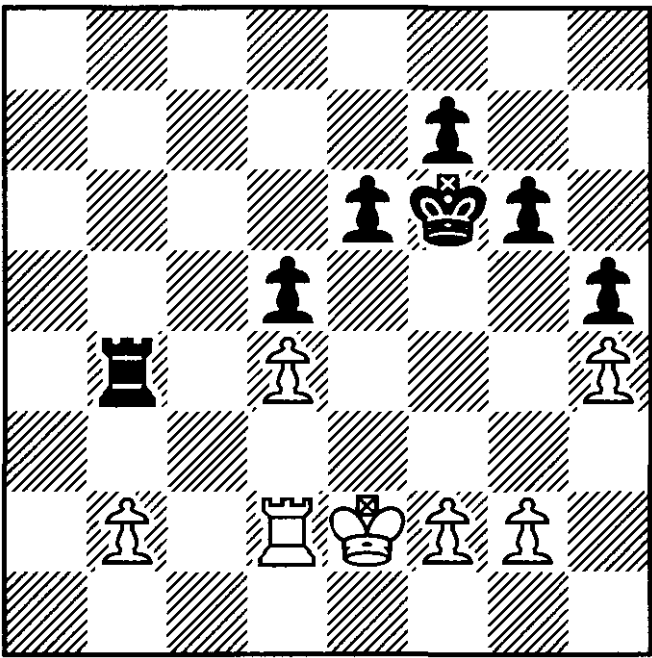
34...Kf6

Boris: Natural, but not strongest. Best was 34...Rb3+! 35 f3 (we will discuss 35 Kf4 Kf6 in the next note) 35...Kf6 36 Kf2 Kf5 37 g3 g5 38 hxg5 hxg5 when I have the very dangerous threat of ...g5-g4. After that all of his pawns would be weak and my advantage decisive.

35 Kf3 h5

Boris: Now 35...Rb3+ 36 Ke2! (36 Kf4 g5+ 37 hxg5+ hxg5+ 38 Kg4 Kg6 39 f3 Rb4 40 Kg3 Kf5 41 Kf2 Kf4 and the threat of ...g5-g4 will win) 36...Kf5 37 Kd1 Ke4 38 Kc2 Rb4 39 f3+ Ke3 40 Rd3+ Kf2 41 Rd2+ Kg3 42 b3 Kxh4 43 Kc3 Rb5 44 b4 Kg3 45 Kb3 and White has counter chances because of the passed pawn on b4.

36 Ke2



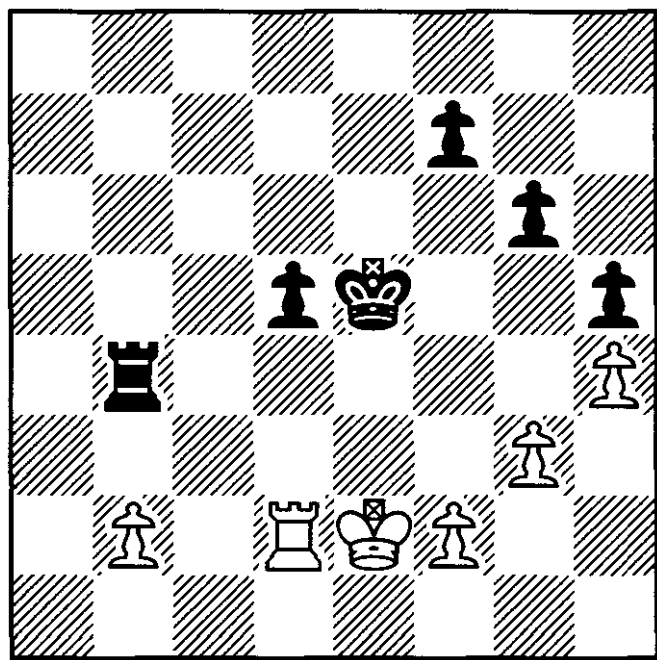
Boris: His plan is to transfer the king to the queenside and push his b-pawn which, instead of being a weakness, will become an asset. In that case it would be impossible to say that Black has a better pawn structure.

36...e5!

Joel: I don't understand this move. It seems to weaken your pawns and give White a target. What is wrong with 36...Kf5 - ?

Boris: In the case of 36...Kf5, similar variations would arise as after 35...Rb3+. With 36...e5, I transform my advantage from a static one to a dynamic one. I now have a more active king and rook.

37 dxe5+ Kxe5 38 g3



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 4)

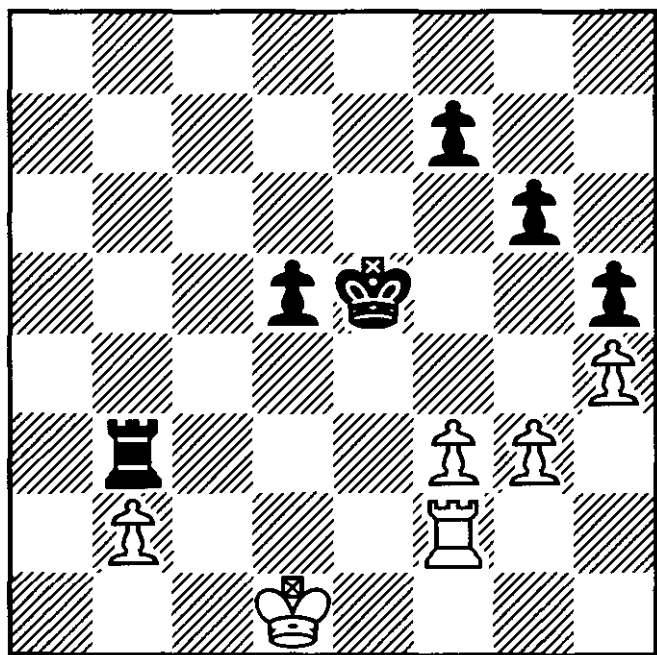
38...Ke4! 39 f3+

Joel: Now White's pawns become weak.

Boris: Right, now all of his pawns are on the third rank and are vulnerable to attack. Instead, 39 Rc2 (or 39 Kd1 d4 40 Kc2 Rc4+ 41 Kb3 Rc7 42 Ka4 d3 43 b4 Rc2) 39...Rb3 40 Rd2 d4 and in both cases Black has a big advantage, but he could try 40 Rc7! Rxb2+ 41 Kf1 f6 with some drawing chances.

39...Ke5 40 Kd1 Rb3 41 Rf2?!

Boris: 41 Ke2!? d4 42 Kf2 Kd5 was a better defense.



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: 41...Kd4 threatens a decisive invasion with the king. Maybe 41 Rf2 was a mistake. After 41...Kd4 Black threatens ...Ke3. He can counter with check, picking up the d5-pawn, but the b-pawn will fall along with the rest of White's kingside.

Boris: Right.

41...Kd4!

Boris: Here the game was postponed. I had a week to analyze this position. My friend Mark Dvoretsky helped me with this and we spoke each evening by phone discussing these positions. I learned a lot of interesting things from him about rook endgames with f- and h-pawns. My final diagnosis then was that it is winning for Black. Now endgame tablebases have found hidden ways to a draw.

42 g4

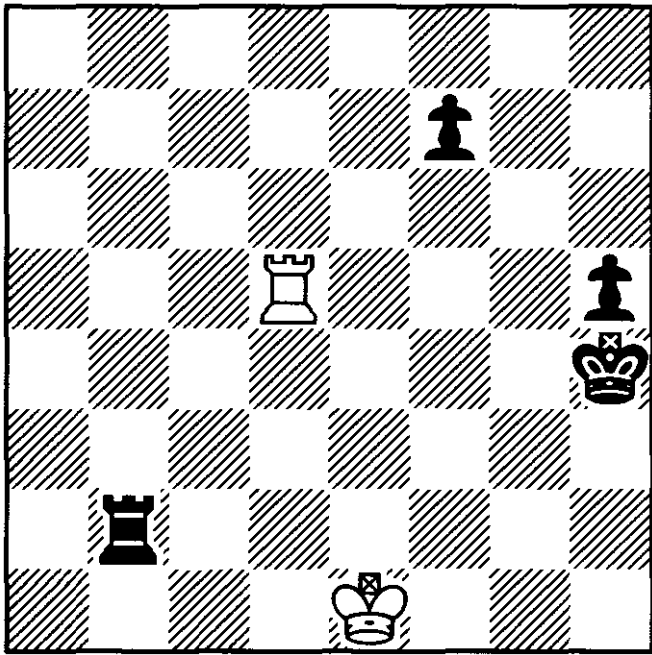
Boris: It was hopeless for White to play 42 Rd2+ Ke3 43 Rxd5 Rxb2.

42...Ke3 43 Re2+ Kxf3 44 gxh5 gxh5 45 Re5 Kg4 46 Rxd5

Boris: After 46 Kc2 Rb5 47 Rg5+ Kxh4 48 Rf5 Kg4 49 Rxf7 h4 Black simply wins.

46...Rxb2 47 Ke1 Kxh4

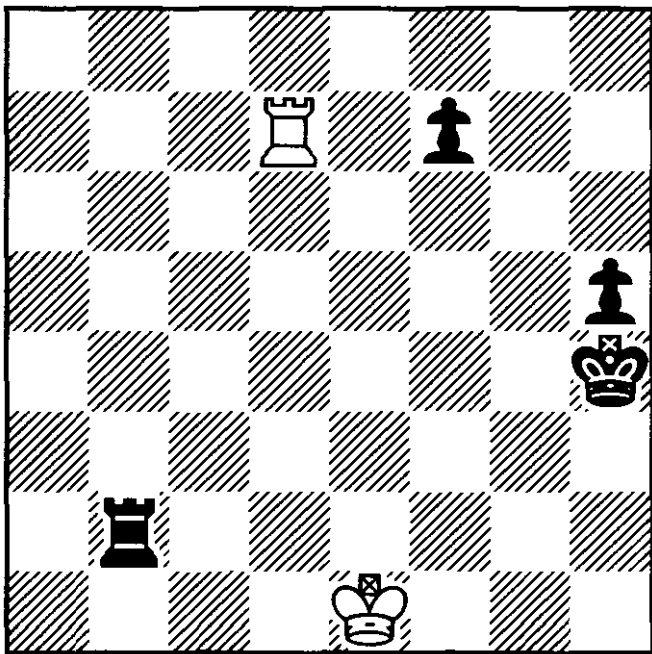
Boris: The endgame tablebase shows that 47...f5 (instead of 47...Kxh4) was not stronger, because after 48 Kf1 f4 49 Rg5+ Kxh4 (or 49...Kf3 50 Kg1 Rb1+ 51 Kh2 Kf2 52 Rxh5 f3 53 Ra5) 50 Rg8 it's a draw.



Exercise: Find the hidden way to a draw. (difficulty level 5)

Boris: White's next move (48 Rd7) looks natural but, with the help of the endgame tablebase, we know it is a decisive mistake. Instead, 48 Rf5! Rb7 49 Ra5!! draws (Dvoretsky and I analyzed only 49 Kf2 Kg4 50 Rf6 h4 51 Kg2 h3+ 52 Kg1 Kg3 and wins); e.g. 49...Kg4 (49...Rb2 50 Rf5!) 50 Ra4+ Kg3 (50...Kg5 51 Kf2 draws too) 51 Ra3+ Kg2 52 Ra2+ Kg1 53 Ke2! h4 54 Kf3 Rb3+ 55 Kg4 h3 56 Ra1+ Kf2 57 Ra2+ is a draw.

48 Rd7



Exercise: What is Black's best move? (difficulty level 5)

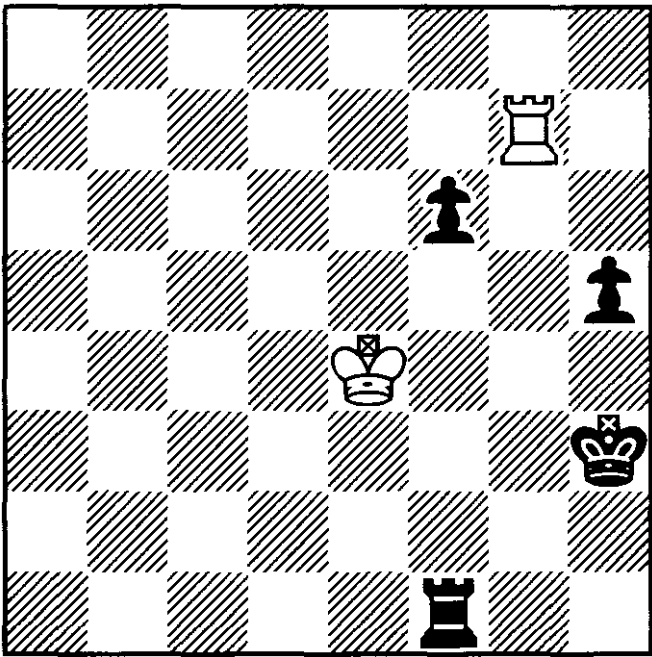
Joel: I do not know the theory of rook endings with f- and h-pawns well but the white king is cut off on the back rank and Black's king is much more active. I believe there are drawing positions in this type of ending, but I would make my opponent prove it and play 48...f5.

Boris: The solution I found is both beautiful and simple. If the king of the weak side is cut off on the first rank and the opposing king is placed normally then the strong side wins by pushing his pawns, threatening mate, and promoting his pawn to a queen. The exception to the rule is that if the king of the strong side is cut off on the h-file, sometimes it's a draw. Dvoretsky and I thought that 48...f5 49 Rg7 was a draw after 49...Rb4 50 Kf2 Rf4+ 51 Ke3 Rf1 52 Ke2. Now the endgame tablebase shows that Black can release his king from the h-file and win with 49...Kh3! 50 Kf1 (50 Rg5 f4 51 Rxh5+ Kg2 52 Rg5+ Kf3 wins for Black) 50...h4 51 Kg1 Rb4! 52 Rf7 Rg4+ 53 Kf1 Rf4+ 54 Kg1 Kg3 winning.

48...f6!!

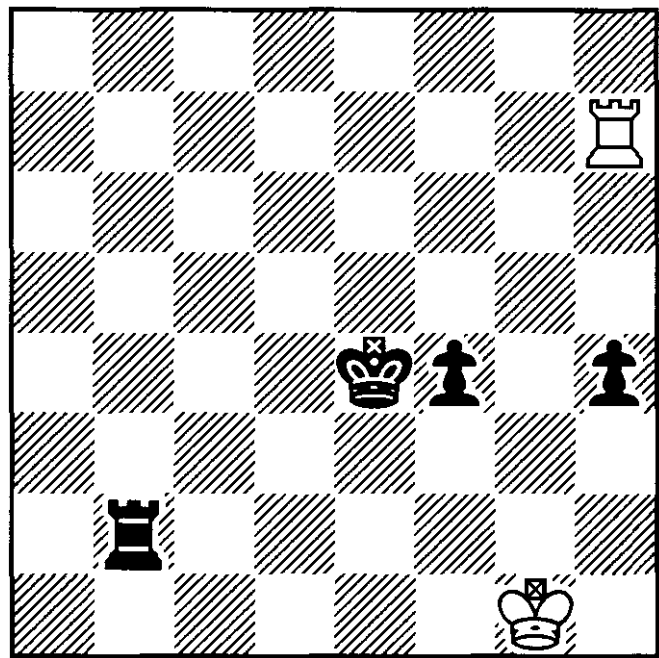
Joel: Can you explain the subtlety of this move?

Boris: This is clearly winning. I found this winning move lying awake in bed analyzing blindfold. The idea behind ...f7-f6 is that my rook would have enough squares on the f-file to run from the white king and it would be an easy win: 49 Rg7 Rb5! 50 Kf2 Rf5+ 51 Ke3 (51 Kg2 Rg5+) 51...Kh3 52 Ke4 Rf1 and Black is winning.



This solution is simple and understandable. An extensive discussion of this rook endgame can be found in Dvoretsky's *Endgame Manual*.

49 Kf1 Kg4 50 Rg7+ Kf5 51 Rh7 Kg6 52 Rh8 f5 53 Rg8+ Kf6 54 Kg1 f4 55 Kf1 Kf5 56 Kg1 h4 57 Rg7 Ke4 58 Ra7



Exercise: If 58 Rh7, how does Black win? (difficulty level 1)

Boris: After 58 Rh7 Black plays 58...Kf3 59 Rxh4 Kg3 attacking the rook and threatening mate. It is this idea of threatening mate that allows Black to reach a winning position. This is a common method in these kinds of endgames.

58...Kf3 59 Ra3+ Kg4 60 Ra8

Boris: The theoretical line is 60 Rc3 h3 61 Ra3 f3 62 Ra8 Rb1+ and either the f- or h-pawn will promote to a queen.

60...Kg3 61 Rg8+ Kf3 62 Rh8 Rb1+ 63 Kh2 Kf2

Joel: Can you explain this move?

Boris: I am sacrificing a pawn but reaching a theoretically winning rook and pawn endgame.

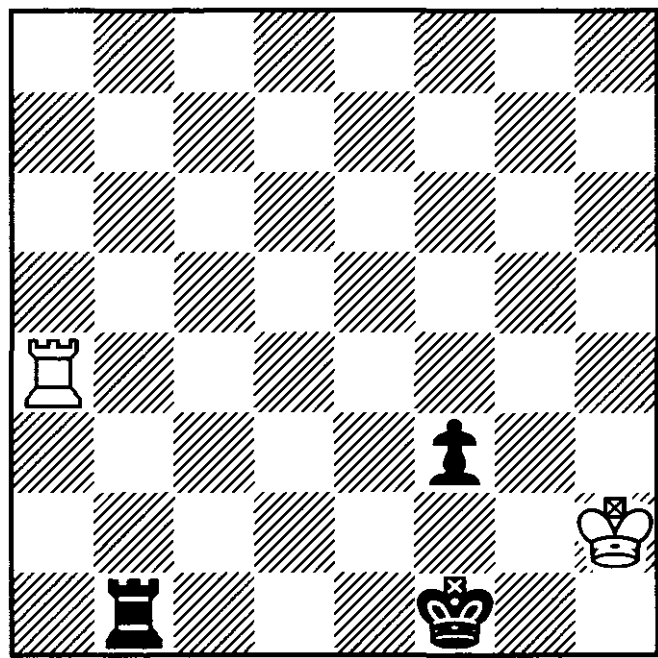
64 Rxh4 f3 65 Ra4 Kf1 0-1 (see following diagram)

Boris: Here my opponent resigned.

Joel: Why?

Boris: It was really premature. After 66 Ra8 f2 (Black threatens to play ...Ke2 and promote the pawn) 67 Re8 (blocking the king's exit) 67...Re1 68 Ra8 Ke2 the pawn

will promote. There is a famous game J.Capablanca-V.Menchik, Hastings 1929/30, in which many mistakes were made in a similar position, but if played correctly it is winning: 66 Kg3 f2 67 Ra2 Rb3+ 68 Kh2 and after 68...Rf3! the pawn is unstoppable. Here 68...Ke1? was Capablanca's mistake (with reversed colors) and Menchik could have drawn with 69 Ra1+ Ke2 70 Kg2, but Dvoretsky reminded me of all this before I resumed my game with Taimanov.



Joel: What was most impressive to me, what I remember most, was that you won in a position that looked very drawn by creating weaknesses and playing with the more active pieces (king and rook). You also transformed your advantage from a static one into a dynamic one. I think one of the harder aspects of chess is knowing when the position has changed or needs to change. For example, I would never have played 36...e5!. The rook ending with f- and h-pawns was also very instructive. It just goes to show how many resources there are in these very intricate positions.

Boris: I would add that the game shows (as did my previous one with Miles) the danger of the pawn minority attack in the endgame. The game shows a very tricky method of psychological warfare in chess. And of course the rook ending was very interesting and instructive for me too. I learned a lot from analyzing this ending during the adjournment, and even more from modern endgame tablebases.

Joel: Would you say that is a weakness in modern chess with faster time controls?

Boris: I would say that in the old days our endgames were stronger because we had to analyze endgames very deeply during adjournments.

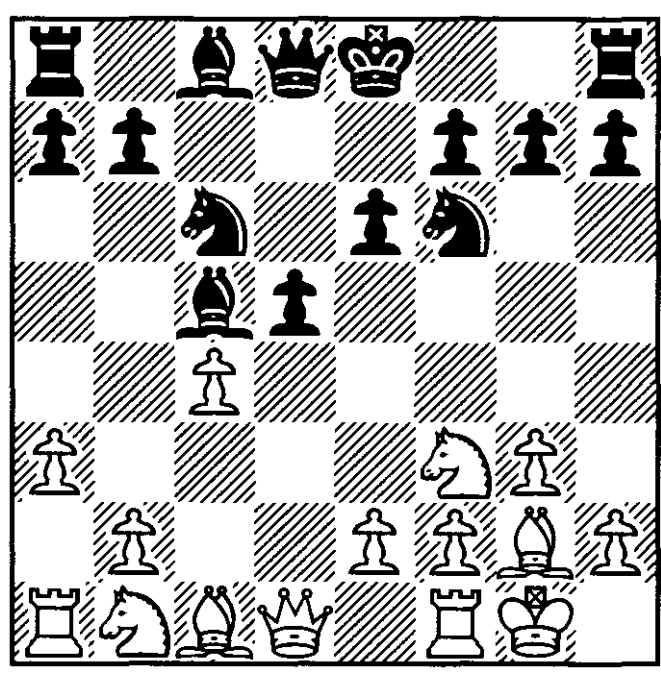
Game Five
B.Gulko-R.Ponomarev
Pamplona 1996/97
Catalan Opening

Boris: Ponomarev was a young star at the time with one serious problem, he had a narrow opening repertoire and against anything that wasn't 1 e4 he played the Tarrasch Defense. So my strategy was to get him into an unfamiliar position because I was more experienced and had more knowledge of different kinds of positions. I thought to myself: "anything but the Tarrasch".

1 c4 e6 2 Nf3 c5 3 g3 Nf6 4 Bg2 d5 5 0-0 Nc6 6 d4 Be7 7 dxc5

Boris: If I were to take on d5 it would become a classical Tarrasch.

7...Bxc5 8 a3



Joel: You played 8 a3 with the obvious threat of b2-b4. Why doesn't he just take on c4?

Boris: It is possible. Illescas played this against me. I played 9 Qc2, got the pawn back, and obtained a good position.

8...a6

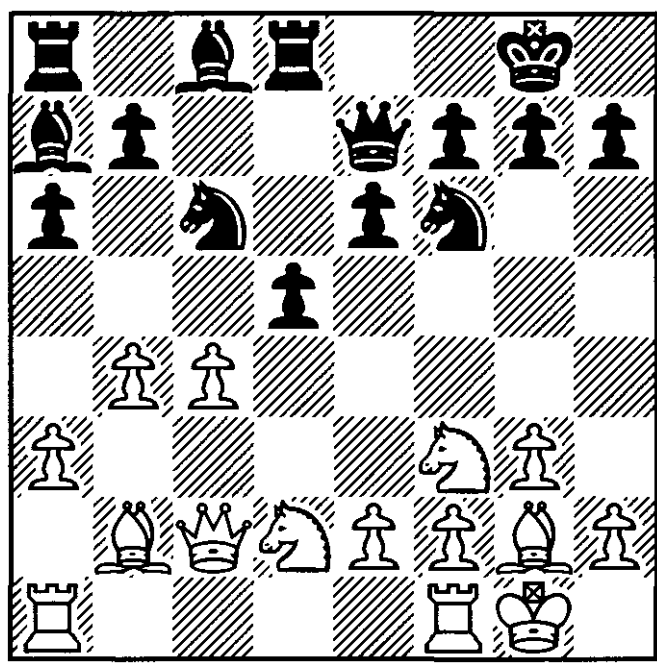
Joel: Why not 8...a5 - ? It seems better to me because it prevents b2-b4.

Boris: This is a reasonable alternative. The drawback is that it weakens the b5-square. Dmitry Schneider played 8...a5 against me (at Lubbock 2007). The game continued 9 cxd5 exd5 10 Nc3 O-O 11 Bg5 d4 12 Bxf6 Qxf6 13 Nd5 Qd8 14 Ne1 with a pleasant position for White.

9 b4 Ba7 10 Bb2 O-O 11 Nbd2 Qe7

Boris: 11...d4? 12 Nb3 e5 13 b5 was bad. This variation shows that he doesn't have the option of keeping his center intact.

12 Qc2 Rd8



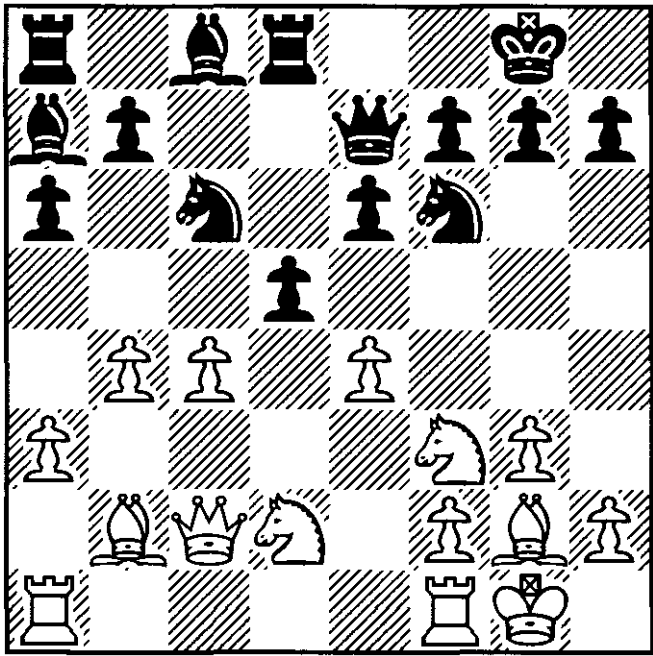
Exercise: White has finished development and has to choose a way to play. How do you evaluate the position and which way would you choose? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Black has a strong bishop on a7 aiming directly at White's king. His light-squared bishop is bad though. Therefore, he will look to develop this bishop somehow but there are tactical risks because of the bishop on g2. If White does nothing, then Black will play ...d5xc4, ...Rb8, or ...d5-d4 (which would give White a dangerous 3:2 queenside pawn majority). White has a space advantage on the queenside with potential for active play. White also has a very strong dark-squared bishop. Therefore, 13 c5 blocks Black's dark-squared bishop and prepares to roll on the queenside. This threat is more dangerous than Black advancing in the center be-

cause of White's e2-pawn and pieces that control the center. Therefore, I would play 13 c5.

Boris: White has an advantage in development. With a dynamic advantage, you cannot miss an opportunity to open the game.

13 e4!

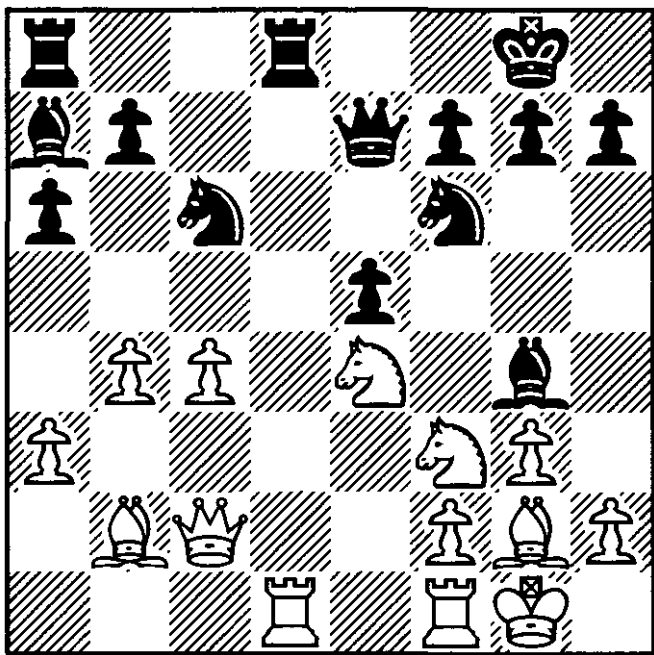


Joel: Interesting! This was my very first reaction but I rejected it because of 13...d4, but now I see that 14 e5 is strong because after 14...Nfd7 15 Re1 White has the makings of an attack on the kingside and the d4-pawn can be weak.

Boris: You are correct. After 13...d4 14 e5 Ng4 (more active than 14...Nfd7, which you analyzed) 15 Qe4 f5 (the trick 15...Ne3 doesn't work because of 16 fxe3 dxe3 17 Nb3 e2+ 18 Rf2 Rd1+ 19 Ne1 and White is winning) 16 exf6 Nxf6 17 Qh4 and White is better. 13...dxc4 14 Nxc4 Bd7 15 e5 Nd5 16 Nd6 is good for White as well.

13...dxe4!? 14 Nxe4 e5 15 Rad1 Bg4?!

Boris: The following variations gave Black a better chance to equalize: 15...Bf5 16 Nxf6+ Qxf6 17 Qe2, or 15...Nxe4!? 16 Qxe4 f6.



Exercise: Black’s plan is to occupy the d4-square.
What does White have to do? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: White can play 16 c5 here, which would lock in the bishop and create a favorable situation for creating a passed pawn on the queenside. This would also allow you to drop your knight in on d6, which is positionally desirable. Black has played 15...Bg4 to reduce one of the attackers on e5. This allows White, instead of 16 c5, to play 16 Nxf6+ Qxf6 17 Rd5 and it is difficult for Black to maintain the pawn because of the pin, so this is what I would play.

Boris: My knight on f3 hangs in the variation you offer. 15...Bg4 is about occupying the d4-square not reducing pressure on e5. With 16 c5, I defend against 16...Nd4. More importantly, I exclude from action the bishop on a7. Excluding an opponent’s piece from action is one of the most important strategic methods.

Joel: It seems in both diagrams my initial idea is strong and then I go through some analysis and arrive at the wrong move. Can you say something or give some advice about the thinking process and how one thinks or makes decisions in a systematic way?

Boris: It is not a thinking problem. You are not self-confident enough. Sometimes you see good moves but don’t trust yourself. As Capablanca advised: *if you see a good move, make it!*

16 c5!

Boris: After 16 c5 Black decided not to go on the defensive but to play actively. However, when your position is worse, it is generally a bad idea to play actively, it only makes matters worse.

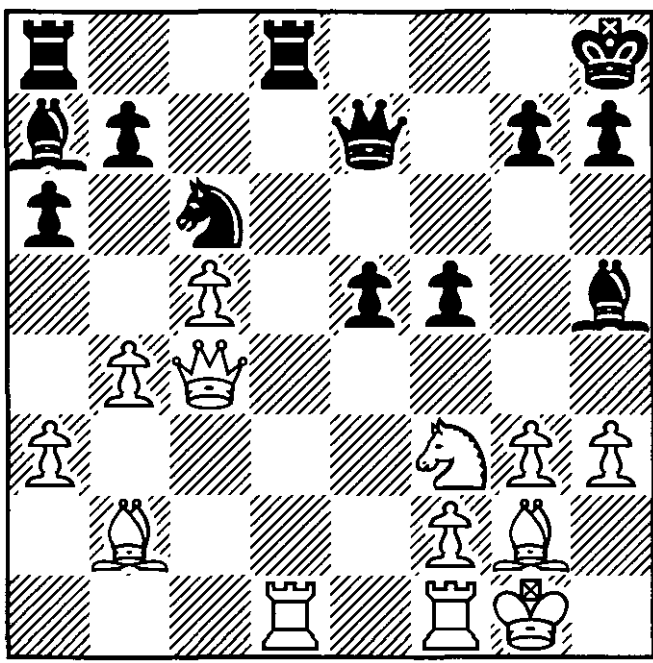
Joel: But you also say when you are in a bad position, or losing, to try and muddy the waters. Can you explain what seems like a contradiction?

Boris: It depends on the position. All chess rules are relative. In this position Black could build a solid defense, but sometimes when the defense is hopeless it is better to create complications.

16...Nxe4

Boris: 16...Ne8 was more tenacious. It defends against Nd6 and doesn't make his position any worse.

17 Qxe4 f5 18 Qc4+ Kh8 19 h3 Bh5



Exercise: What does White have to do? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: The e5-pawn seems weak. I think 20 Rxd8+ Rxd8 21 Nxe5 Nxe5 22 Re1 works... but now I see 22...Nf3+ 23 Bxf3 Qxe1+ and Black is better.

Boris: Black is winning.

Joel: Yes. 20 Rfe1 pinning the pawn and putting another attacker on the e5-pawn is a possibility, but what about 20...e4. This seems strong at first but I think it is very weakening, creates targets for White, and makes White's dark-squared

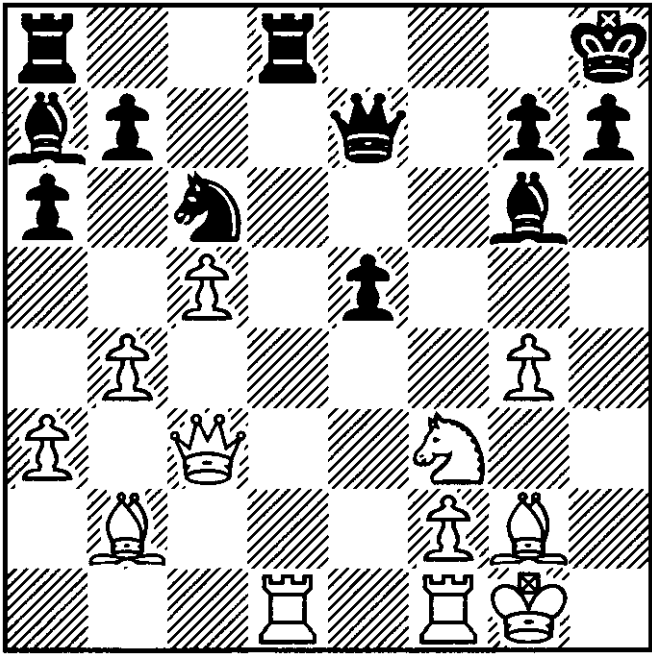
bishop very strong. Therefore, I would play 20 Rfe1.

Boris: After your suggestion Black can just take on d1 and play 21...e4 and White loses a piece. White's pieces are on their best squares so he has to open the position. After improving the position of all your pieces (they are on their best squares) we have to look for pawn moves. It is logical because any move by a piece will make your position worse.

20 g4!

Joel: This is very strong. I see it immediately.

20...fxg4 21 hxg4 Bg6 22 Qc3!



Boris: White found the weakness in Black's camp.

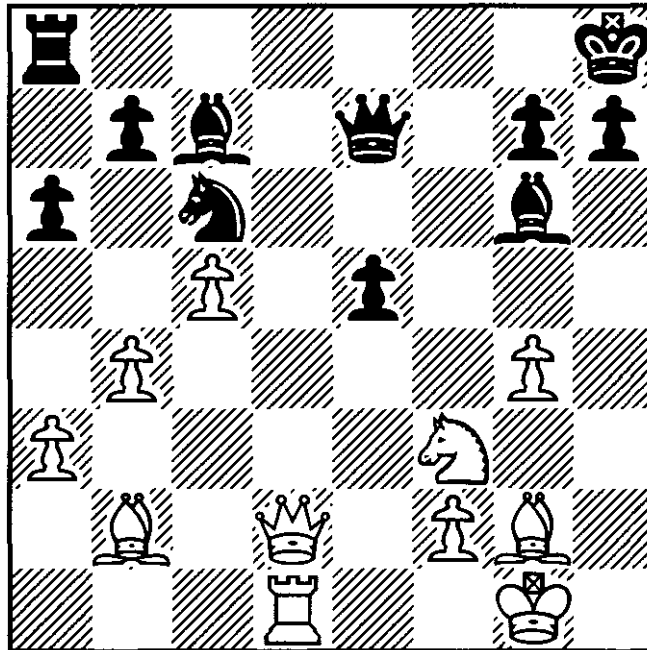
Joel: Can he defend with 22...e4 - ?

Boris: After 22...e4 White would play 23 Nh4 and Black cannot take because of mate on g7. His position would simply be losing.

22...Rxd1 23 Rxd1 Bb8

Boris: A funny mate could occur after 23...Re8 24 Rd5! Be4 25 Nxe5 Bxd5 26 Ng6+ hxg6 27 Qh3+ Kg8 28 Bxd5+ Kf8 29 Qh8 mate, while in the case of 24...Bb8 25 Qd2 White has the d-file and a clear advantage.

24 Qd2 Bc7



Exercise: How does White break through? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: It seems to me that Black's e-pawn is too weak to hold. Nimzowitsch says first to blockade and then destroy the isolated pawn. I think 25 Ng5 is called for, but this loses to 25...Rad8 because the queen is overloaded. Therefore, 25 Re1, beginning to pile up on the pawn, is what I would play.

Boris: 25 Re1 removes the rook from a better position to a worse position. Black's most important defender in this position is his queen so you must find a way to get rid of her.

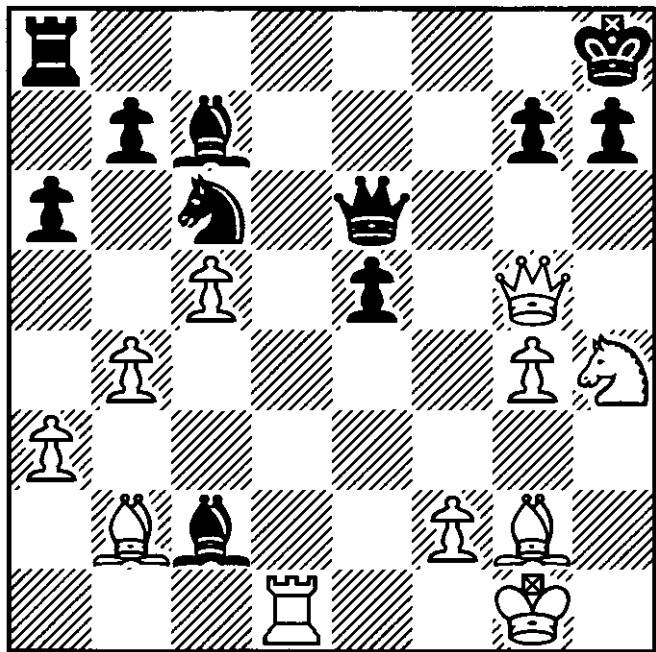
25 Qg5! Qe6

Joel: What would happen if he exchanged queens?

Boris: The endgame would be very favorable for White. The knight would go to e6, Black has a terrible weaknesses on the queenside, and White has control of the d-file. For example: 25...Qxg5 26 Nxg5 Rd8 27 Rd5!, threatening Ne6, and if 27...Rxd5 28 Bxd5 White has the better pawn structure, better pieces, and Black's king is very bad.

26 Nh4 Bc2

Boris: Another possibility was 26...Bd8 27 Nxg6+ hxg6 28 Qd2 Qxg4 29 Qd7 Qe2 30 Qh3+ Qh5 31 Rd7. It is interesting to sacrifice a pawn in order to go into an endgame, but the final position results in my rook on the seventh rank, which is worth more than a pawn.



Exercise: What would you play here? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I think this helps the rook get to a better square (e1), which helps put pressure on the weak e5-pawn.

Boris: Again you move the rook from a better to a worse position. The e5-pawn is not weak because it is well protected. White's advantage is in the activity of his pieces; therefore, he cannot waste time.

27 Nf5!

Joel: Again, a tactical shot ignoring the opponent's threat and keeping the initiative. It reminds me of your move 20 Nf4! against Radjabov (Game One).

Boris: Generally, we have to play chess actively and see how we can make threats of our own before looking to defend the threats of others. After 27 Rd2 h6! 28 Qh5 Bh7 my advantage immediately disappears in accordance with the rule of Steinitz: *if you miss your chance to attack your advantage will vanish.*

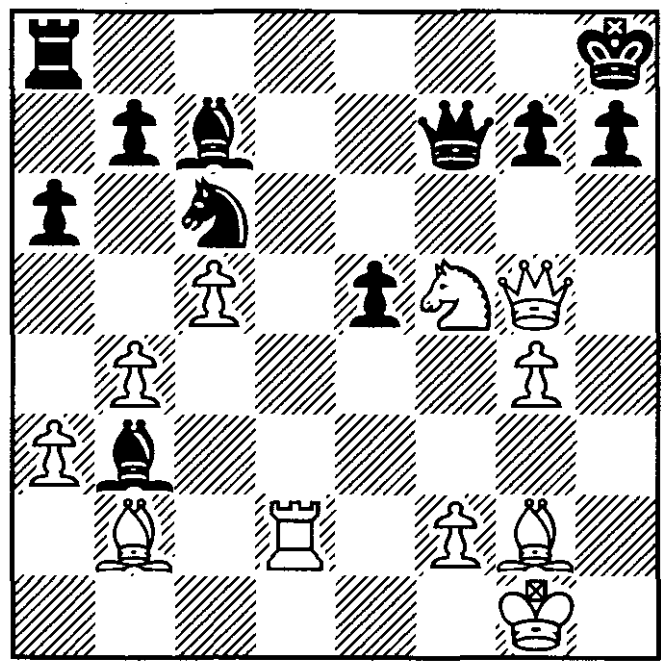
27...Qf7

Boris: A sharper line was 27...Rg8!? 28 Rd2! (28 Bd5? Qf6 gives away the advantage) 28...Bd8 29 Qh5 g6 30 Qh6 Bxf5 31 Bd5!, but this would have been good for White too.

28 Rd2 Bb3?

Boris: If 28...Bxf5 then 29 Qxf5 Qxf5 30 gxf5 Rd8 31 Rxd8+ and White has a win-

ning endgame because of the bishop pair and weaknesses on the queenside, though this would have been better than the game.



Exercise: What does White have to play? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: I am thinking about 29 Nd6, which seems like it would give White a very dangerous, maybe even winning, passed d-pawn. I am also thinking that Black’s king is under attack and Black’s pieces are far away, so it may be time for a direct attack on the enemy king. I think this is better than 29 Nd6, which gives away a very strong knight for a bishop that is merely protecting the e5-pawn. I’m thinking that 29 Be4 is also strong as it brings another attacker into the game, but will 29...h6 kick my queen? My intuition says no, as this would be horribly weakening. I want to keep up the attack and the initiative and take advantage of Black’s misplaced pieces. Oh well, I can’t decide, so I would just play 29 Nd6. I don’t think it is bad.

Boris: You spend too much time verbalizing and not enough time and energy calculating. Here White has a small combination transposing the game into a winning endgame.

29 Qxg7+

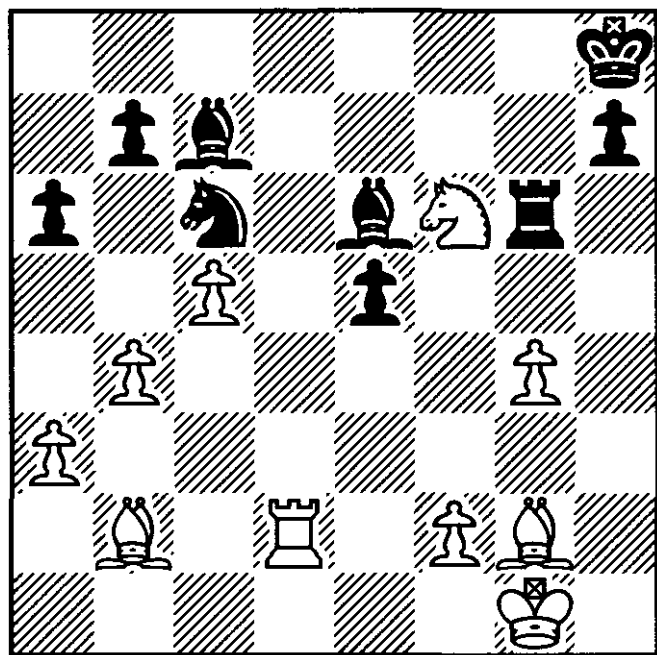
Joel: I didn’t even consider this move.

29...Qxg7 30 Nxg7 Rg8 31 Nh5 Be6

Joel: Why can’t he just play 31...Rxg4 - ? Probably because of 32 Rd7 when Black is in real trouble.

Boris: White wins by force after 31...Rxg4 32 Rd7 Bd8 33 Rxd8+ Nxd8 34 Bxe5+ Kg8 35 Nf6+, or 32...Bb8 33 Rxb7 with same idea of forking the king and rook.

32 Nf6 Rg6



Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 1)

33 Ne8!

Boris: It is White’s most active move. White cannot allow Black to breathe, he must continue to attack. After 33 Ne8 White is essentially winning a piece.

33...Bxg4

Boris: 33...Bb8 34 Bxc6 bxc6 35 Rd8 Rxg4+ 36 Kf1 Bc4+ 37 Ke1 Re4+ 38 Kd1 Re2 39 Nd6+ was no better.

34 f3 Bxf3 35 Nxc7 Rg7 36 Ne8 Rg8 37 Nd6 Nd4 38 Nf7+ Kg7 39 Nxe5 Ne2+ 40 Kh2 Bxg2 41 Rxe2 Bd5 42 Ng4+ 1-0

Joel: What I remember most from this game is the importance of not removing your pieces from their best squares. In order to do this, you must sometimes ignore your opponent’s threats and create threats of your own in response.

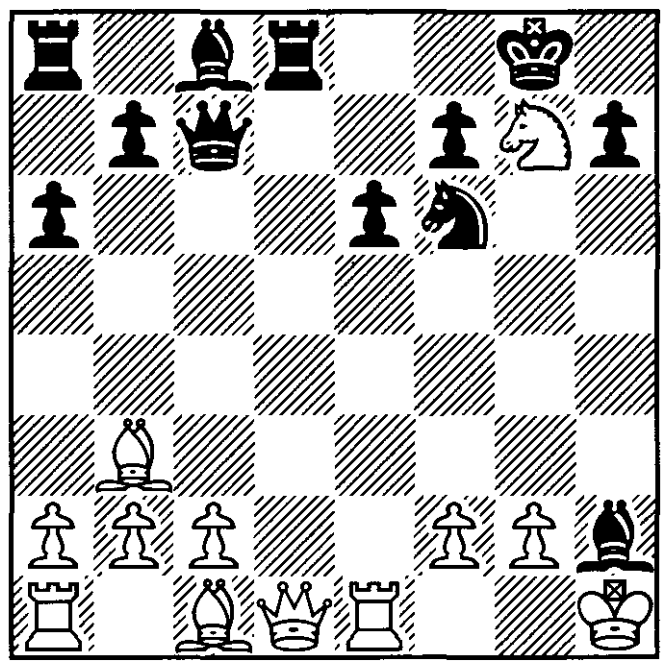
Boris: I want to mention a couple of technical methods. The first method of playing is excluding your opponent’s pieces from action. The second method of play-

ing is counter-intuitive because we generally do not consider exchanges when we are attacking. However, exchanging your opponent's most important defensive pieces is sometimes the best way to increase the pressure. For a great example of this method, see the classic game Smyslov-Reshevsky, World Championship Tournament 1948. Also, I want to repeat Steinitz's rule: *missing your opportunity to attack leads to the evaporation of your advantage.*

Game Six
P.Wolff-B.Gulko
US Championship, Durango 1992
French Defense

Boris: This was a very important game in a very strong tournament (including Seirawan, Benjamin, Christiansen, De Firmian, all the best American players). My opponent took first over me by half a point as he won in the final round and I only drew. This game was played in the middle of the tournament; we didn't know at the time it would come down to the final round.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5 4 exd5 Qxd5 5 Ngf3 cxd4 6 Bc4 Qd6 7 O-O Nf6 8 Nb3 Nc6 9 Nbx d4 Nxd4 10 Nxd4 a6 11 Bb3 Qc7 12 Re1 Bd6 13 Nf5 Bxh2+ 14 Kh1 O-O 15 Nxg7 Rd8!



Joel: This is a highly theoretical opening. All the moves to this point have made some sense but this one seems a bit mysterious. Can you talk about how you came up with this move, called “Gulko’s move” in John Watson’s *Play the French*, and explain what is going on in this position?

Boris: It was well known in 1992 that 15 Nxg7 led to advantage for White. Before this tournament, Lev Psakhis told me by telephone that Kasparov mentioned that

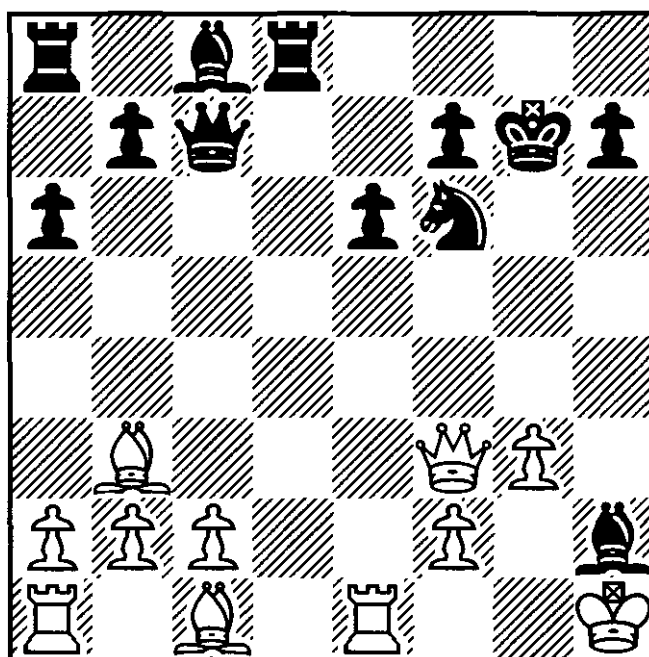
Black was alright after 15...Rd8. That's all I knew; the rest was my homework.

Joel: Why is 15...Rd8 such a good move? What is going on?

Boris: White is better developed so Black needs to find a way to develop his pieces. It was known that after 15...Kxg7 16 Qd4! White has a decisive attack. The move 15...Rd8! not only develops, it also prevents 16 Qd4. Such a position, however, requires exact analysis not just general ideas.

16 Qf3 Kxg7 17 g3

Boris: In later games they tried 17 Bh6+!? Kg6 18 c3 Nh5! and the complications end up leading to a draw. Alas, the most romantic positions after thorough analysis end up as dry theory.



17...b5

Joel: Why not play 17...Bxg3 since it looks like you will lose the bishop anyway? Is it that you want to keep the g-file closed?

Boris: Yes, 18 Rg1 would be very unpleasant. After 17...b5 Black suddenly has counterplay on the long diagonal.

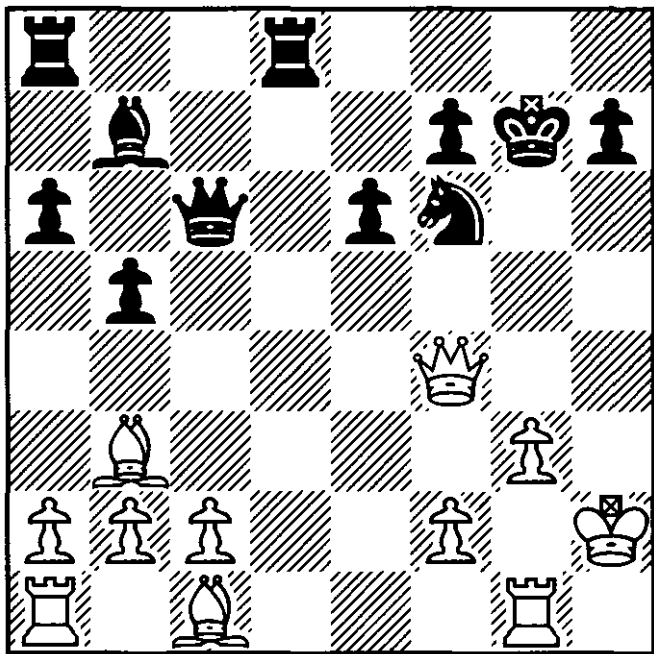
18 Kxh2

Boris: White doesn't have the intermediate 18 Bf4, because after 18...Bb7! 19 Bxc7 Bxf3+ 20 Kxh2 Ng4+ 21 Kg1 Rd2 Black has a huge advantage.

18...Bb7 19 Qf4

Boris: And here White didn't have 19 Bh6+? Kg6 20 Qf4, because after 20...Qc5 he simply loses.

19...Qc6 20 Rg1



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 2)

20...Rd1!

Boris: Threatening 21...Qh1+!. Now White has to take the game into an ending.

21 Be3! Rxa1 22 Qh6+ Kg8 23 Qg5+ Kf8 24 Qc5+ Ke8!

Boris: Keeping White's bishop on e3 where it will be exchanged.

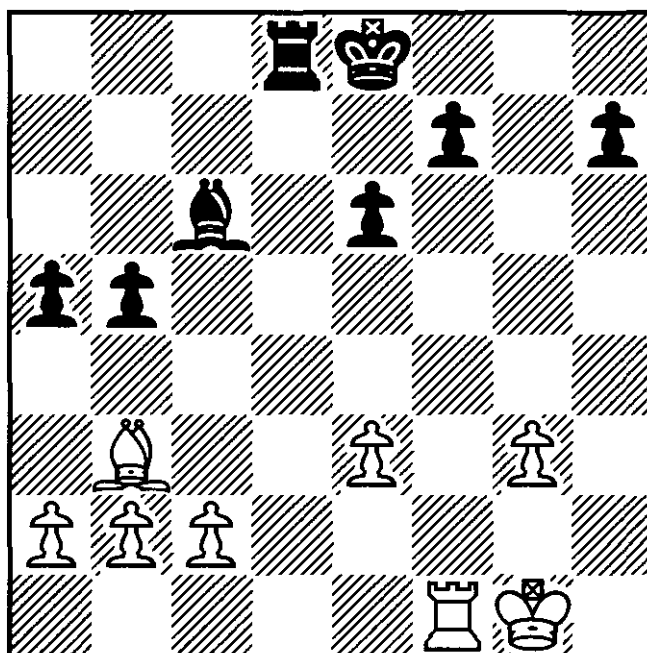
25 Qxc6+ Bxc6 26 Rxa1 Ng4+ 27 Kh3

Boris: After 27 Kg1 Nxe3 28 fxe3 Rd8 29 Rf1 a5! there are basically two positions that arise where Black is winning by force:

(see following diagram)

a) 30 c3 Rd3 and Black will win either the e-pawn or b-pawn. With the open file it is important to have a square to penetrate.

b) 30 a3 a4 31 Ba2 Be4 32 c4 Rd2 33 Rf2 Rd1+ 34 Rf1 Rxf1+ 35 Kxf1 Bd3+ 36 Ke1 bxc4 37 Kd2 f5 38 Kc3 Kd7 39 Bxc4 Bxc4 40 Kxc4 h5 and the pawn ending is winning for Black, because my a4-pawn controls both his a- and b-pawns. Essentially Black is a pawn up.



27...Nxe3 28 fxe3

Joel: I think Black is better because he has the better pawn structure (White has two isolated pawns and Black only one), he has the better bishop, and his rook will control the only open file.

Boris: Yes, but which imbalance is most important? I think the most important advantage is the open file, which I take immediately on the next move.

28...Rd8 29 a4 b4

Boris: I don't give him an open file, and I place my pawns on dark squares so as not to impede my light-squared bishop.

30 Bc4

Boris: White plans to close the open file. In the case of 30 a5 Rd2 31 Ba4 Kd7 Black has a big advantage because his rook is better placed (on the seventh rank, which is every rook's dream) and more active.

30...a5

Boris: This fixes his pawns on light squares and fixes my advantage. If I had played 30...Rd2 right away, 31 Bxa6 would have given him a dangerous passed pawn. In such positions, it is important to deprive your opponent of any counterplay.

31 Bb5 Rc8

Boris: Exchanging would activate his rook and give my opponent a passed pawn so

this was out of the question.

32 Bd3

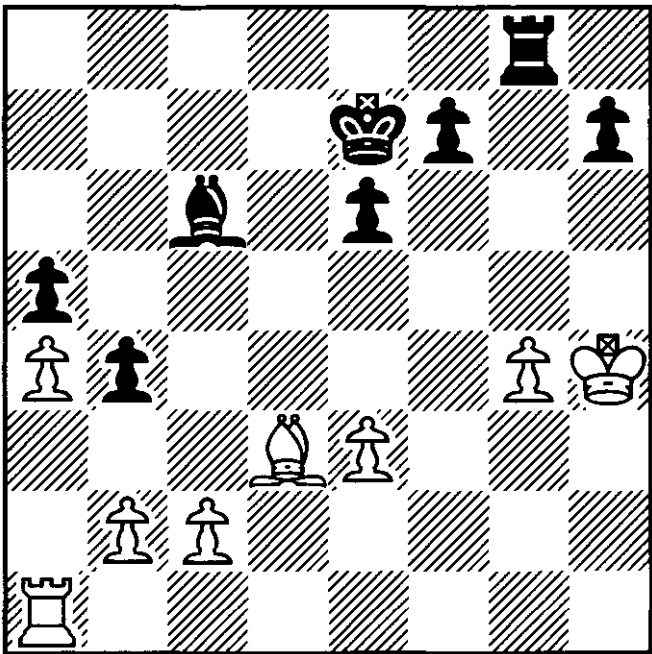
Boris: Now we see a transformation of one advantage to another. I don't have the open file but I have fixed his queenside pawns on light squares.

32...Ke7 33 g4?!

Joel: Why do you consider this move to be dubious?

Boris: For White, the best plan would be to bring the rook through f4 to h4, attacking my h7-pawn. In this case, he would have decent counterplay. By playing 33 g4 he closed the fourth rank and deprived himself of this maneuver (e.g. Ra1-f1-f4-h4). So the best way was to play 33 b3, protecting his pawn and preparing the rook maneuver.

33...Rg8 34 Kh4



Exercise: What is the correct move and plan for Black in this position? (difficulty level 3)

34...h6!

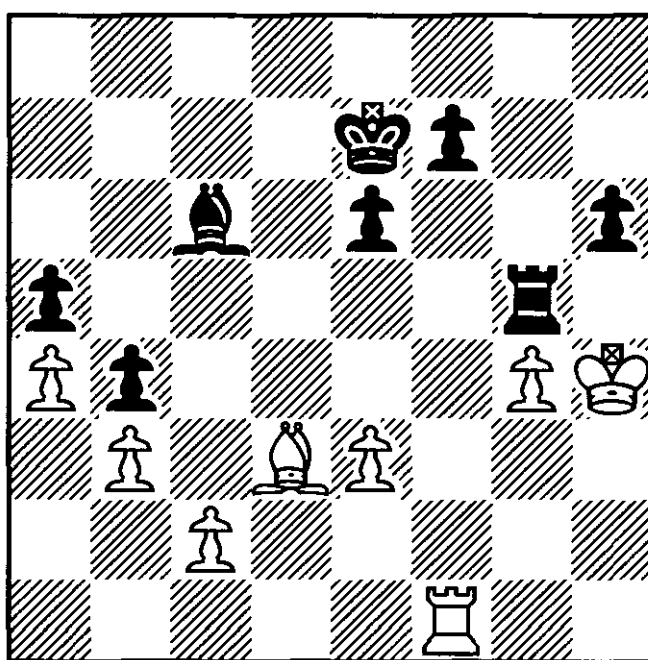
Boris: White missed his opportunity to activate his rook via the fourth rank; now Black activates his rook through the fifth rank. For this he needs the g5-square.

35 Rf1

Joel: The a4-pawn is en prise at first glance but 35...Bxa4 would be answered by 36 Ra1, recovering the pawn and activating White's rook. As I indicated earlier, Black's advantage lies in his better pawn structure. In order to take advantage of this Black should cut off the white king with 35...Rg5 with the threat of ...Re5 attacking the pawn. This would force White's rook into a passive position or force e3-e4 restricting his bishop.

Boris: It is not really a matter of cutting the king off. It is a matter of activating the rook and attacking his weaknesses.

35...Rg5 36 b3



Exercise: How can Black use the method of zugzwang in this position? (difficulty level 4)

36...Re5?!

Boris: Black plays the natural 36...Re5 which is not bad, but 36...f6! was stronger. I didn't realize during the game that White would be in zugzwang in this position: 37 Rf4 Re5 38 Rc4 (after 38 e4 a new zugzwang would arise: 38...Kf7 39 Kg3 Kg6 40 Kh3 Kg5 41 Kg3 Ba8 and Black is winning; e.g. 42 Kf3 f5) 38...Bd5 39 Rc5 Rxe3 40 Rxa5 Bxb3 and Black wins a pawn.

37 Re1

Boris: White's rook is now passive.

37...f6 38 Kg3 h5 39 gxh5 Rxh5

Boris: Now I have a more active rook and all of his pawns will be fixed on light squares. I have the advantage, but because there is not much material on the board it is still difficult.

40 e4 Kd6 41 Kf4 Kc5 42 e5!?

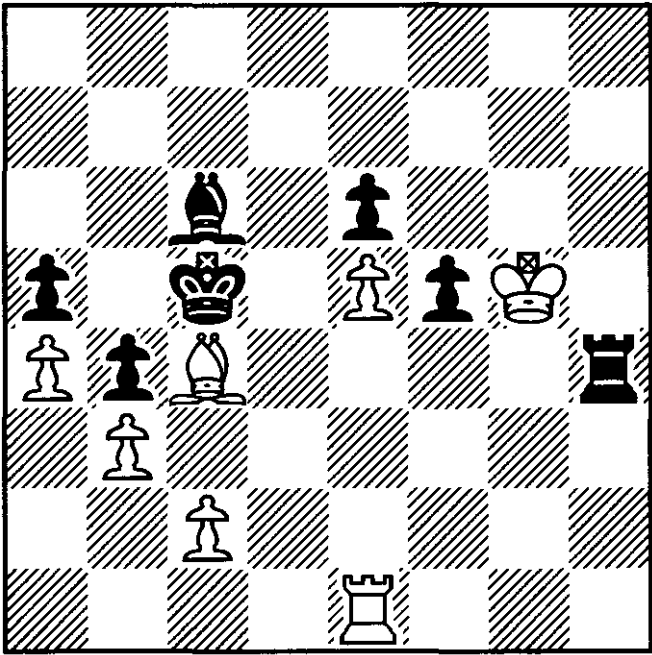
Boris: 42 Rg1 e5+ 43 Ke3 Rh3+ 44 Kd2 Kd4 would be hopeless for White.

42...f5 43 Bc4 Rh4+

Joel: Why not just play 43...Bd5 - ?

Boris: In this case, Black would lose his advantage. For example, 43...Bd5 44 Bxd5 Kxd5 45 Rd1+ Kc5 46 Rd6 and White's position is not worse.

44 Kg5



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 3)

44...Rxc4!

Joel: Wow!

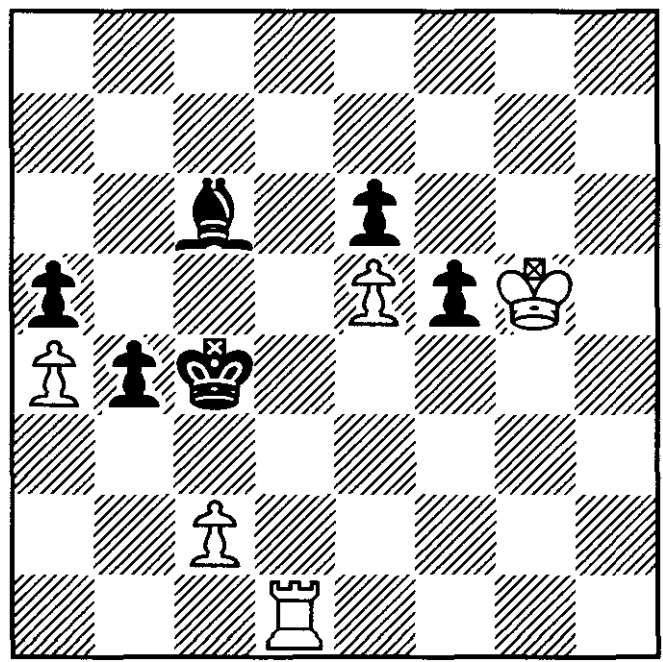
Boris: In such positions, the bishop is often better than the rook because it can attack on one flank and simultaneously defend of the other. After the exchange sacrifice, Black has a winning position.

Joel: Can you say something about the exchange sacrifice historically. It is my impression that today GMs are willing to sacrifice the exchange without a moment's

hesitation whereas in the past they were less likely.

Boris: Petrosian was great at playing the exchange sacrifice. In the first game of this book, Radjabov missed his chance to survive because he did not consider the exchange sacrifice. Generally, it is important to feel in which situations your minor pieces are not worse than your opponent's rooks.

45 bxc4 Kxc4 46 Rd1



Boris: With 46 Rd1 the position becomes sharp. This is a good practical decision. The natural-looking 46 Kf6 fails to 46...Bd5 47 Rf1 Kc3 48 Rf2 f4! 49 Ke7 (after 49 Rxf4 Kxc2 the b-pawn will queen easily) 49...f3 50 Kd6 and Black wins with a number of moves; e.g. 50...Kd4, 50...b3, or 50...Bc4.

46...Bxa4

Joel: 46...Bd5 keeps the rook out and allows Black to play against the pawns with his king in closed quarters.

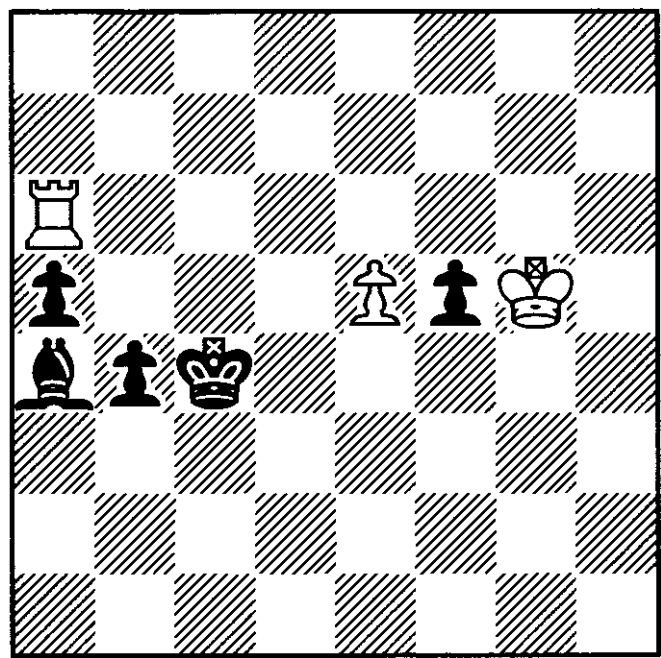
Boris: It would be a mistake. After 46...Bd5 47 Rd2 (47 Rd3 would prevent the mistake 47...Kc3 and also prevent Black's plan of winning the queenside pawns) 47...Kc3?? 48 Rxd5 exd5 49 e6 White wins. By playing 46...Bd5, I would give away my chance to win.

47 Rd6 Bxc2 48 Rxe6 Ba4!?

Boris: I considered 48...b3! as not sufficient for winning during the game because of 49 Rb6 Kc3 50 e6 b2 51 Rc6+! Kd2 52 e7, and because the a4-e8 diagonal is

closed by the rook Black doesn't have ...Ba4 and the position is a draw, but 49...Kc5! would win after 50 Rb8 Kd5 51 Kf6 f4. In the game, I didn't see 49...Kc5.

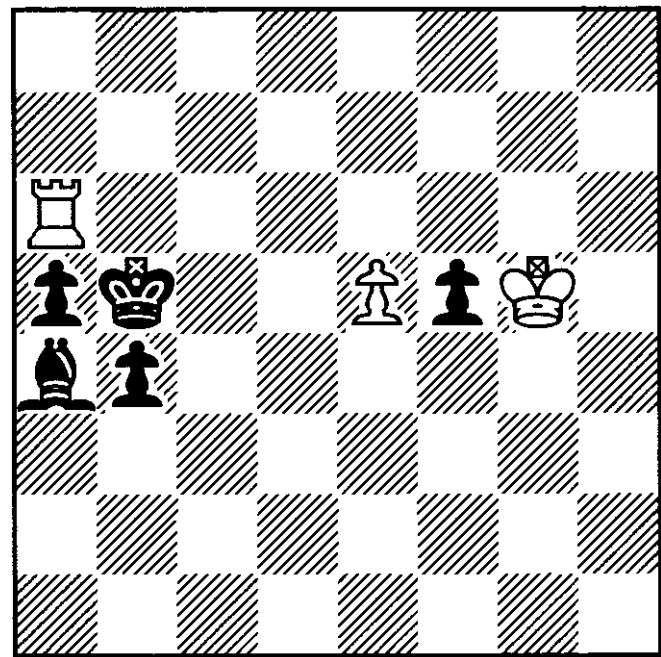
49 Ra6



Exercise: What is the correct way for Black to win? (difficulty level 3)

49...Kb5?

Boris: I rejected 49...b3 50 Rxa5 b2 51 Rxa4+ Kc5 52 Ra5+ Kc6 53 Ra6+ Kb7 and Black wins because I thought there was simpler way, but there is a hidden draw.

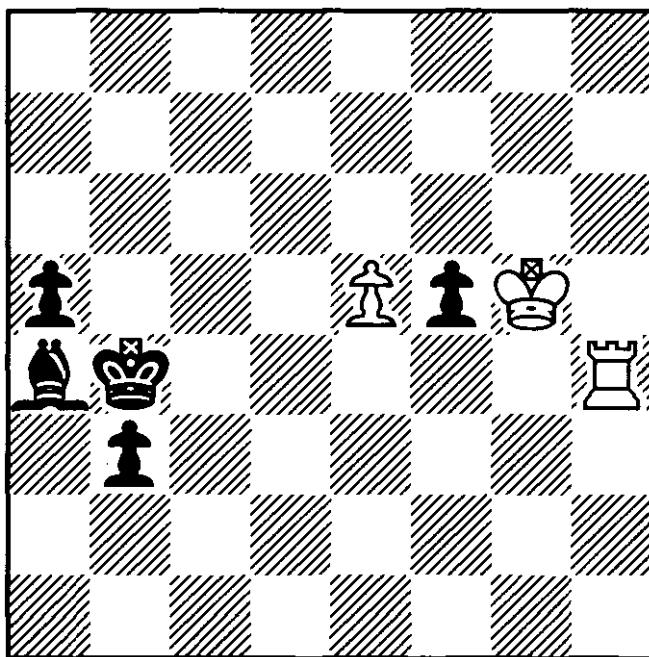


Exercise: Can you find White's hidden draw? (difficulty level 5)

50 Ra8?

Boris: Correct was 50 Rh6! b3 51 e6! f4 (I need to close the fourth rank – otherwise Black is even worse; e.g. 51...b2 52 e7 Kc5 53 Rh1 and if 53...Kb4 54 Rh4+ Kb3 55 Rxa4) 52 e7 Kc4 53 Rf6 Kc3 54 Rxf4 Bd7 55 Rf3+ Kb4 56 Rd3 Be8 57 Rd8 Bc6 58 Rc8 and White's rook follows Black's bishop forcing a draw.

For 18 years (until the computer found 51 e6!) I thought this position was winning for Black because of 51 Rh2? Kb4 52 Rh4+ and then:



Exercise: Find the clear win for Black. (difficulty level 5)

Boris: 52...f4!!.

Joel: Wow! Can you explain this move?

Boris: I have to open his king up to checks: 53 Rxf4+ Ka3 54 e6 b2 55 e7 b1Q 56 Rxa4+ Kxa4 57 e8Q+ Qb5+ winning. If my pawn was on f5 I would be in a queen ending that is probably a draw.

50...b3 51 e6 Kb4 52 Rb8+ Ka3 53 Kxf5 b2 0-1

Boris: This game received the prize for the best game of the tournament. In 1992, it was an important game for the theory of this variation of the French Defense. Now, it is most interesting for its endgame. It demonstrated how important it is to use the ranks for rook maneuvers. Wolff spoiled his position playing 33 g4 closing

the fourth rank for his rook. I used the fifth rank successfully for my rook, and this made all the difference. After this, a very unusual zugzwang with many pieces on the board could have arisen if Black had found the move 36...f6! over the board. The game also shows that bishops, by being able to play on both flanks, can be better than rooks in endgames. This was the justification for my exchange sacrifice.

Game Seven
B.Gulko-G.Kasparov
 USSR Championship, Frunze 1981
Modern Benoni

Joel: Can you put this game in context? From a historical perspective.

Boris: The first time I played him was 1978. I was the favorite. I was the USSR Champion and he was a 15-year-old debutant, but he outplayed me and I drew with a miracle. By the time we played this game, he was already the favorite. He was winning all of the tournaments including this one (he tied for first with Psakhis). I was out of practice because I was a refusnik.

Joel: What is that and why were you out of practice?

Boris: Refusniks were Russian Jews who applied for emigration but were refused, which is where the term comes from. We were refusniks for seven years. For two of those years they didn't let me play chess in any tournaments – until our first hunger strike, and only then they allowed us to play in 2 or 3 tournaments a year, so in 1981 I started to return to chess.

Joel: Who is us?

Boris: Me and my wife.

Joel: Was it highly publicized?

Boris: Yes, it was a dramatic struggle, which I document in my book, *The KGB Plays Chess*.

Joel: Was Kasparov considered in 1981 the way Magnus Carlsen is today?

Boris: Yes, exactly. It was clear he would be the next world champion.

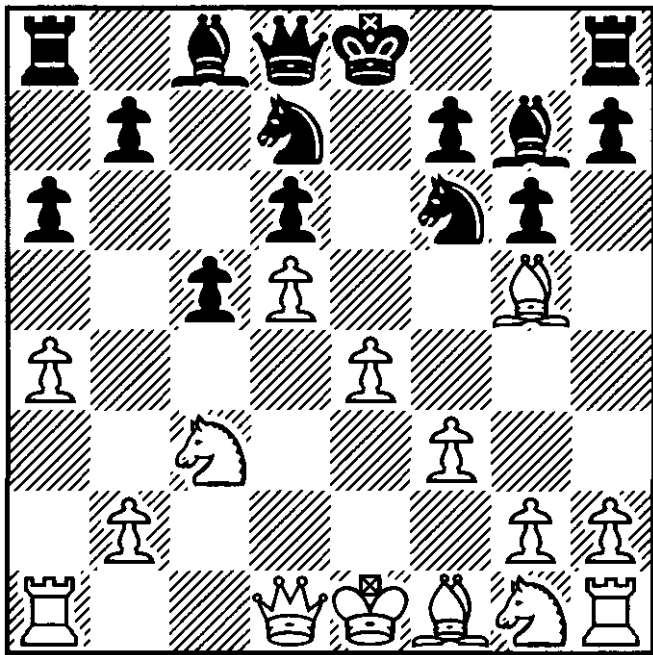
1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 c5 4 d5 exd5 5 cxd5 d6 6 e4 g6 7 f3

Joel: Can you say something about this move?

Boris: I transpose the game into a variation known from the Sämisch King's Indian. I started to play this line in the 1960s and won some important games, one against Geller. The idea behind this move is that in the Benoni White tries to play in the center with f2-f4 and e4-e5 because he has an extra pawn there. Here, with

the move f2-f3, White completely changes the plan. White wants a stable position in the center and expects Black to play on the queenside where White hopes to take advantage of weaknesses Black creates there.

7...Bg7 8 Bg5 a6 9 a4 Nbd7?!



Exercise: How can White prove that Black’s last move was dubious? (difficulty level 2)

Boris: This natural move is a very serious mistake. For White, there is one problem: what to do with the knight on g1? From e2 it can only go to c1 (obviously not ideal) or g3 where it can get attacked by ...h5-h4. By playing 9...Nbd7, Black allows me to transfer the knight to f2 via h3 because he blocks his light-squared bishop. The f2-square is a very appropriate square for the knight in this system. The theory of this system with f2-f3 and Bg5 was only starting to develop and this was an important game as it became a very popular approach afterward.

Joel: What could he have played that would have prevented your knight maneuver?

Boris: Black should castle and keep the knight on b8 until I develop my knight from g1. This variation was very successful for White until Tal found the correct idea: 9...O-O 10 Nge2 h6 11 Be3 Re8 12 Ng3 h5 and now Black is ready to attack the white knight with the plan of ...Nh7 and ...f7-f5. The correct plan for Black in this variation is to play on the kingside not on the queenside. This was Tal’s discovery.

Joel: Do you remember the game?

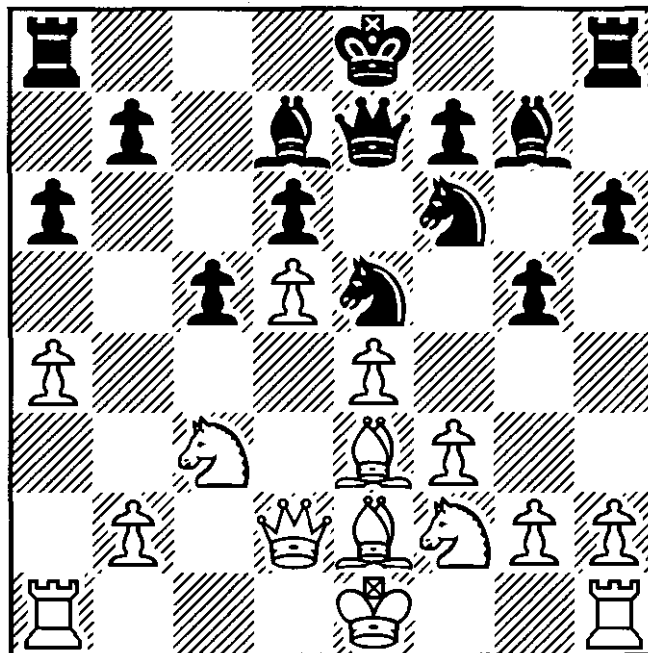
Boris: Well, it was not his game. He was helping Nakhimovskaya prepare for a game in a team competition and he showed her this plan. Therefore, although it was first played by Nakhimovskaya, it was Tal's plan.

10 Nh3! h6 11 Be3 Ne5 12 Nf2 Bd7 13 Be2 g5! 14 Qd2

Boris: An alternative plan for White is 14 f4!? gxf4 15 Bxf4 Qe7 (15...O-O!?) 16 Qd2 h5 (16...Neg4!?) 17 Bg5!.

14...Qe7?!

Boris: It was better to play 14...Rb8 and if 15 a5 then 15...b5 16 axb6 Rxb6, sacrificing a pawn for questionable compensation.



Exercise: How does White have to play? (difficulty level 2)

15 a5!

Boris: Black's last move allowed me to fix his queenside and start to attack it.

15...Rb8 16 Na4

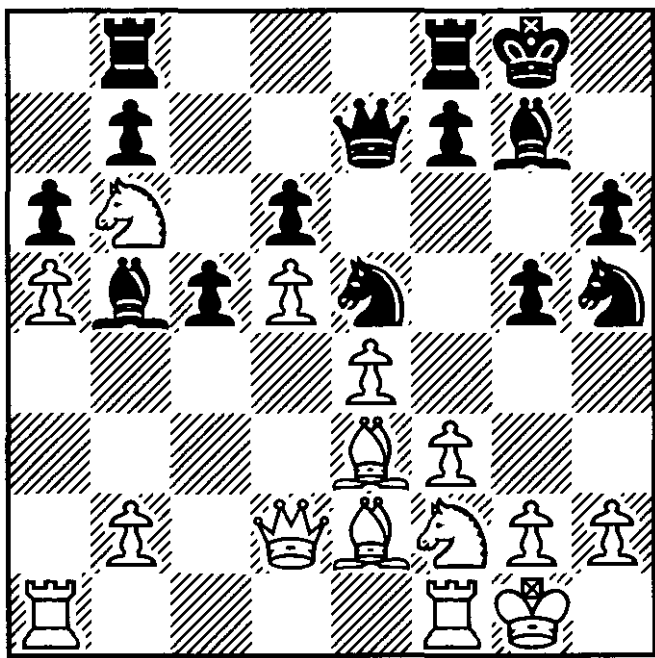
Joel: After 16 Na4 he can't move his b-pawn.

16...Nh5!?

Boris: With this move we see that Black is a great player. He sees that his game is

hopeless on the queenside so he starts to make something happen on the kingside at all costs. In the case of the natural 16...Bb5!? 17 O-O! I am ready to play Nh1-g3-f5 and his position is hopeless. (17 Nb6 Nfd7 was inferior for White.)

17 Nb6 Bb5 18 O-O O-O



Exercise: How does White proceed with his plan? (difficulty level 2)

19 b4!

Boris: This move is the culmination of White's queenside strategy.

19...c4!?

Boris: With this move he tries to decoy my pieces and, in the time it takes me to win the c-pawn, he hopes to create an attack on the kingside. In the case of 19...Bxe2 20 Qxe2 cxb4 21 Rab1 White would have a big advantage in a quiet situation.

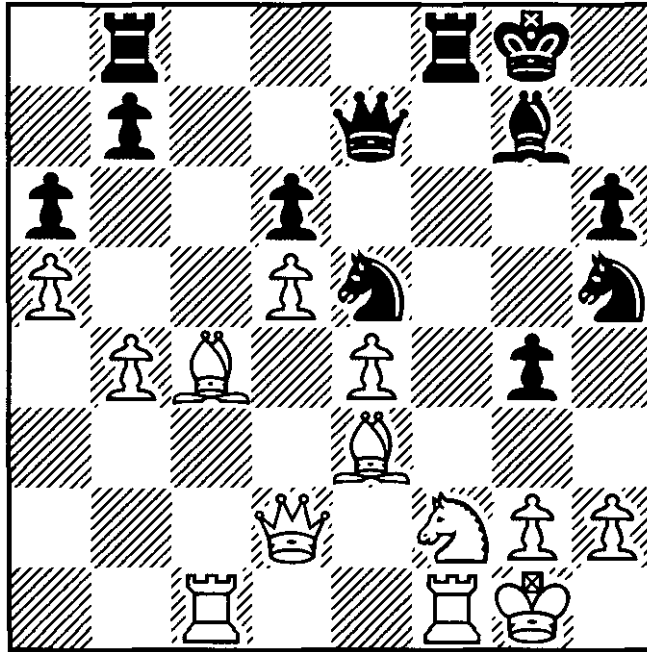
20 Rac1 f5!? 21 Nxc4 Bxc4 22 Bxc4 g4! 23 fxg4!

Boris: 23 f4?! Nxc4 24 Rxc4 g3! 25 hxg3 Nxg3 26 Rfc1 fxe4 would be wrong for White.

Joel: Why is this wrong?

Boris: Because in the final position there are equal pawns and Black has active opportunities.

23...fxg4



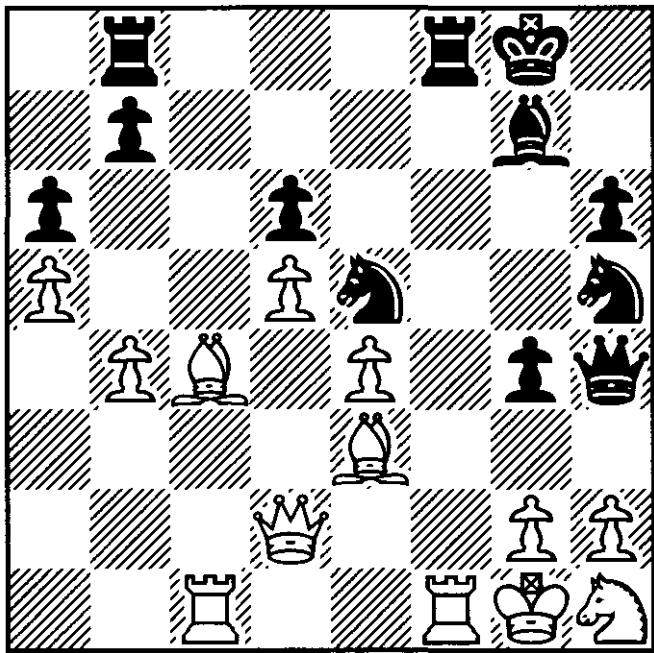
Exercise: How can White extinguish Black's activity on the kingside? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White has the advantage. He is up a pawn (although it is backward) and has the bishop pair (although the light-squared bishop is currently obstructed by the e4- and d5-pawns). Black is trying to generate a kingside attack as the endgame would be bad for him. The pawn push ...g4-g3 must be part of this plan because exchanging would give Black a strong knight on g3, which could lead to a mating attack with ...Qh4 and ...Rxf2. Therefore, White should prevent this move. Also, White should aim to kill Black's counterplay and exchange pieces, heading towards the endgame when his extra pawn and bishop pair will give him a decisive advantage. The move 24 Nh1! accomplishes both of these goals.

Boris: Good! I would add that with this move I also kill the activity of his knight on h5. This reminds me of a very deep thought of Nimzowitsch's: *when we are attacking the best moves are very often the most beautiful, but when we are defending the best moves very often look ugly.*

24 Nh1! Qh4

Boris: During the game I considered the knight sacrifice as Black's last chance, but playing accurately White refutes the idea: 24...Nf3+!? 25 gxf3 gxf3 26 Ng3 Nxf3 27 hxg3 Qxe4 28 Bd3 Qg4 29 Qh2! Bd4 30 Bf2!.



25 Be2!

Joel: Why is this such a good move?

Boris: With this move I continue playing against the h5-knight and simultaneously over-protect the f3-square.

25...g3 26 Nxg3

Boris: Of course White has to get rid of his knight on h1 and trade off Black’s knight on h5. It would be a mistake to take with the h-pawn; for example, 26 hxg3? Rxf1+ 27 Rxf1 Qxe4 28 Bxh5 Nc4 29 Nf2 Qxe3 and Black has escaped his troubles.

26...Nxg3 27 hxg3 Qxe4 28 Rxf8+ Rxf8 29 Bf4!

Joel: Why do you give this an exclamation point? It seems to me that you are just shutting down the kingside and consolidating your advantage.

Boris: After this move Black’s initiative has evaporated. White has an extra pawn and a much better position. Generally speaking, the game is won.

29...h5 30 Rc7 Qb1+ 31 Qc1 Qg6

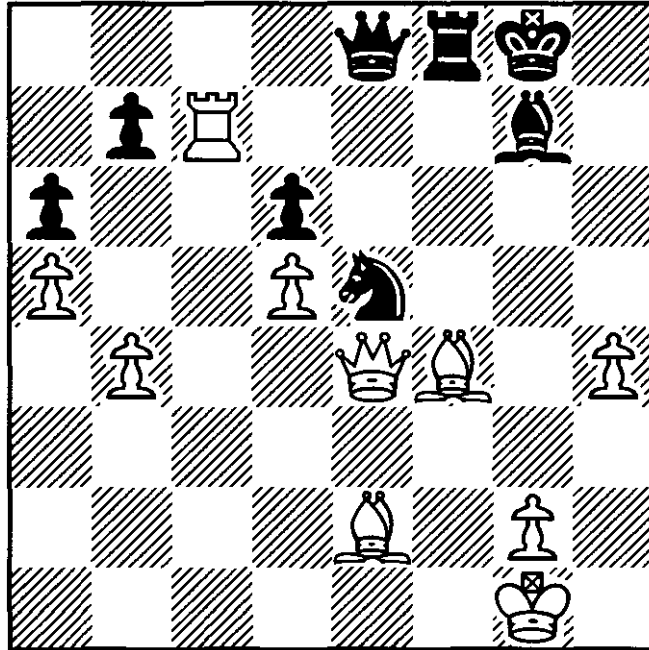
Boris: Black doesn’t have 31...Qxb4 because of 32 Rxc7+ Kxc7 33 Bh6+ and White is winning.

32 Qc2 Qe8 33 Qe4

Boris: I planned a small combination here but during the game forgot about it and

made a move that is not worse but not so spectacular. I planned 33 Bh6! Nd7 (if 33...Nf7 34 Qg6 wins) 34 Bxg7 Kxg7 35 Bxh5 and wins.

33...h4 34 gxh4



34...Qd8

Boris: If 34...Ng6 then 35 Qxe8 Rxe8 36 Bh5 wins.

35 Rxb7 Qc8

Boris: If 35...Qxh4 then 36 Rxg7+ Kh8 37 g3 wins.

36 Re7 Qd8 37 Bg5 1-0

Boris: The game shows that a bad strategy in the opening can bring disaster even to the greatest of players. After White achieved the advantage on the queenside, Black tried everything to get active on the kingside but, using prophylaxis, White was able to extinguish Black's chances.

Joel: What I liked about the game, beside your prophylactic moves such as 24 Nh1, was actually how Kasparov tried his best to activate on the kingside. It demonstrates what you have often said that all great players will try to muddy the waters rather than suffer in a hopeless position. I know for myself that I have sat there lifeless and suffered defeat when I should have taken active chances.

Boris: That's correct. We will discuss this topic of muddying the waters in much greater detail when we analyze my game against Korchnoi (Game Sixteen).

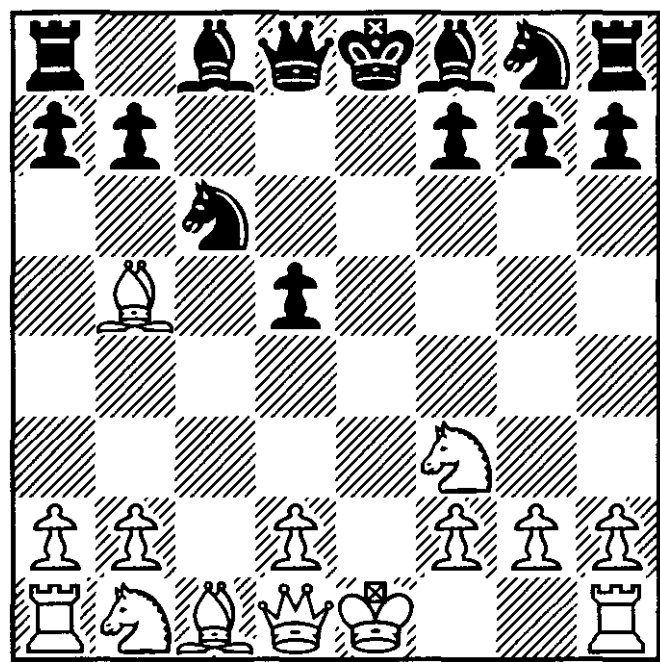
Game Eight
B.Gulko-A.Shabalov
Bern 1992
Caro-Kann Defense

1 c4 c6 2 e4 e6 3 Nf3

Boris: Because it is clear that Black's next move will be ...d7-d5, White chooses a plan where he can castle quickly and try to create threats on the e-file.

3...d5 4 cxd5 exd5 5 exd5 cxd5 6 Bb5+ Nc6

Boris: In the case of 6...Bd7 White would keep a small initiative after 7 Qb3 – or 7 Bxd7+ Qxd7 8 Ne5 Qc7 9 O-O as it was in M.Botvinnik-S.Flohr, Leningrad (11th matchgame) 1933.



Exercise: How should White make use of his advantage in development? (difficulty level 3)

7 Qe2+!

Boris: This is the only way to prevent Black from castling comfortably. In the case of 7 O-O Bd6 8 Re1+ Nge7 Black achieves equality.

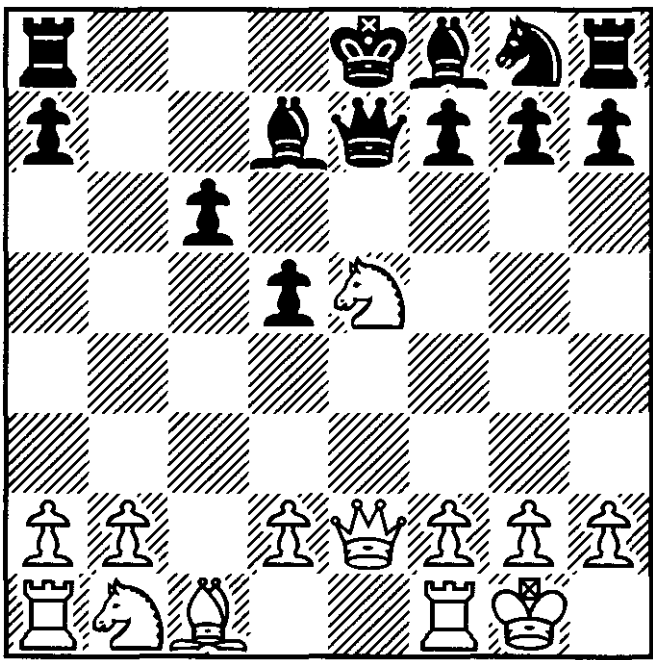
7...Qe7

Boris: After 7...Be7 8 O-O Nf6 9 Re1 Black's king will be stuck in the center.

8 Ne5 Bd7 9 Bxc6 bxc6

Boris: Another possibility was 9...Bxc6!? 10 O-O O-O-O, but the position of Black's king may not be safe.

10 O-O



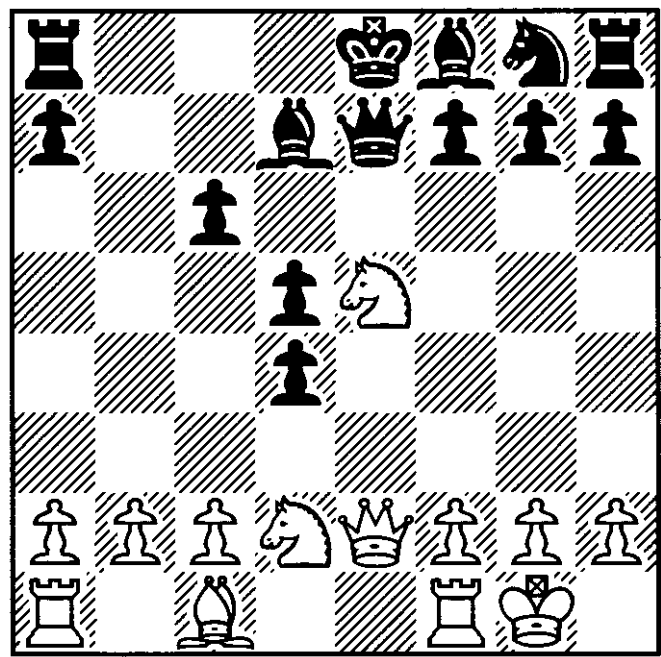
Exercise: How can Black reduce the pressure? (difficulty level 3)

10...Kd8!

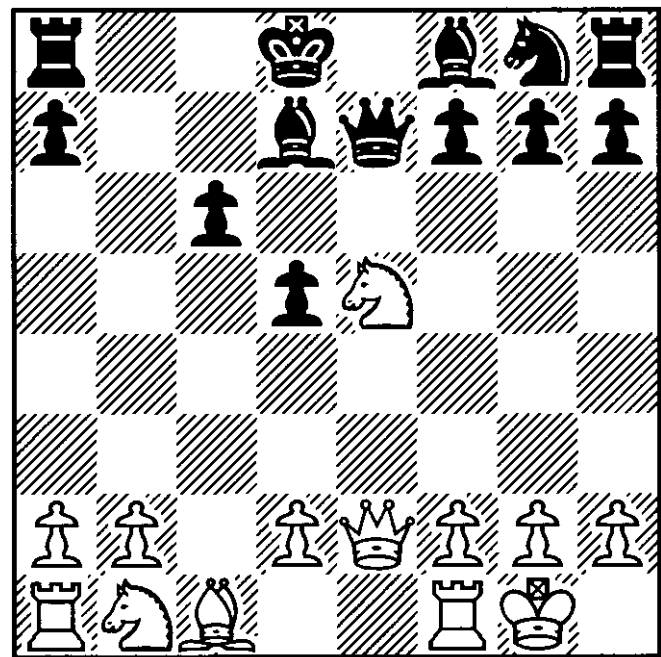
Boris: The king gets stuck in the center anyway. Now Black threatens 11...f6 winning a piece. A similar idea was introduced in the game V.Ivanchuk-S.Dolmatov, Manila Interzonal 1990: 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 Nd2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 5 Bb5+ Nc6 6 Ngf3 cxd4 7 Qe2+ Qe7 8 Ne5 Bd7 9 Bxc6 bxc6 10 O-O

(see following diagram)

10...Kd8 11 Nb3 f6 12 Bg5 fxg5 13 Na5 Qe8 with a draw, although Black is probably winning here.



After the game continuation, it is very difficult for White to keep queens on the board, which is important in positions where your opponent’s king is stuck in the center and vulnerable to mating attacks. In the case of other moves, Black would be in serious trouble; e.g. 10...Nf6 11 Re1 (threatening Nxd7). The attempt to trap the queen also would not work: 10...f6 11 Qh5+ g6 12 Nxg6 hxg6 13 Qxh8 Nh6 14 d4 g5 15 b3 with the inevitable Ba3 on the horizon.



Exercise: How does White maintain the initiative? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: White maintains the initiative by getting his pieces into the game with tempo or threats. The first move that comes to mind is 11 d4 to free the bishop,

but 11...f6 wins. 11 b3 jumps out because it comes with the threat of Ba3. Yes, I like this move a lot.

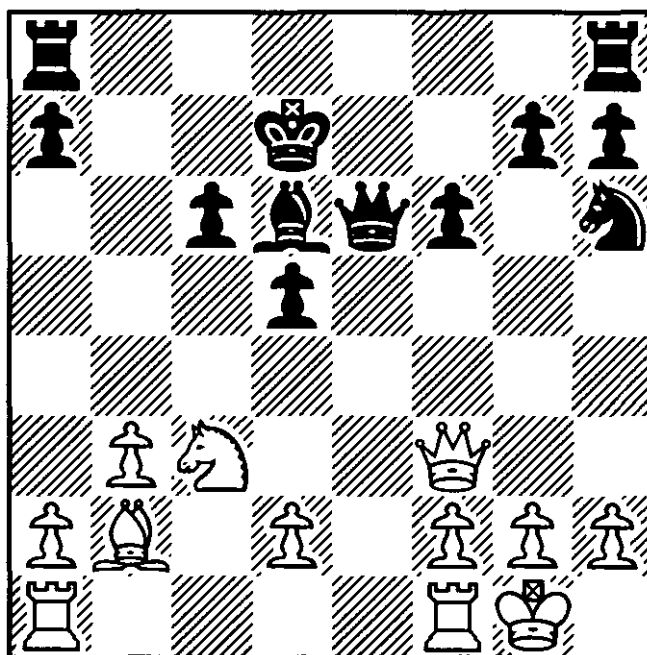
Boris: Very good, you arrived at the correct solution 11 b3!, but you needed to calculate the critical line: 11...f6 12 Ba3 c5 (12...Qxe5 13 Qxe5 fxe5 14 Bxf8 and Black loses two pawns) 13 Bxc5 Qxc5 14 Nf7+ Kc7 15 Nc3 which is bad for Black.

11 b3! Qe6

Joel: My plan is to keep the initiative and develop my pieces rapidly, ideally with threats and gain of tempo. 12 f4 is interesting because it threatens 13 f5, but after 12...f6 13 f5 Qxe5 White is lost. However, this analysis reveals a weakness in Black's position so that White can play 12 d4 (freeing the bishop, holding the knight, and preventing ...Bc5) because if 12...f6 then 13 Qf3 is strong. Therefore, 12 d4 would be my move.

Boris: 12 d4 is an equally good move to the one played in the game. White needs to figure out a way to keep queens on the board and both moves do that.

12 Bb2 f6 13 Qf3 Bd6 14 Nxd7 Kxd7 15 Nc3 Nh6



Exercise: What is White's plan? Which pieces does he want to exchange and which pieces does he want to keep on the board? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White's plan is to continue pressuring Black because his king is stuck in the center of the board, and White should keep an eye out for combinations that tear open the center at the right moment. Black is threatening to play 16...Qf5 or

16...Qg4 in order to exchange off queens, which will make Black's defensive task easier (hence ...Nh6). White should keep the queens on the board in order to have a chance at a mating attack. The central piece of Black's defense is the bishop on d6. Therefore, White should aim to exchange it by playing 16 Na4. If Black responds with 16...Qf5 or 16...Qg4, White can play 17 Qe3 when he will maintain control of the dark squares (d4 and c5) and will be able to play Nc5+.

Boris: This is the most important lesson of the game. The only chance of an advantage for White is the position of Black's king. Therefore, White should exchange off minor pieces and keep queens and rooks on the board, when the king's position will be an important factor.

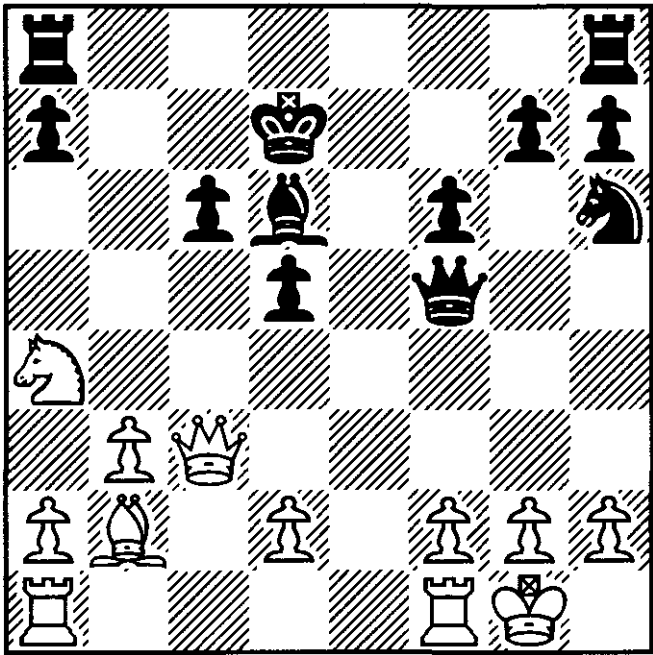
Joel: Is that a general principle?

Boris: Yes. With queens and rooks on the board, the king is very vulnerable. The minor pieces give Black counterplay and provide defense, so that the position of the king is less important. Therefore, White has to exchange minor pieces and keep major pieces on the board.

16 Na4! Qf5

Boris: Black doesn't have time for 16...Ng4? 17 Rfe1! Nxf2 18 Qc3 Qg4 19 Rac1 Rac8 20 Re3! and Black's position is bad, because he cannot get the knight out without going into a losing endgame after 20...d4.

17 Qc3

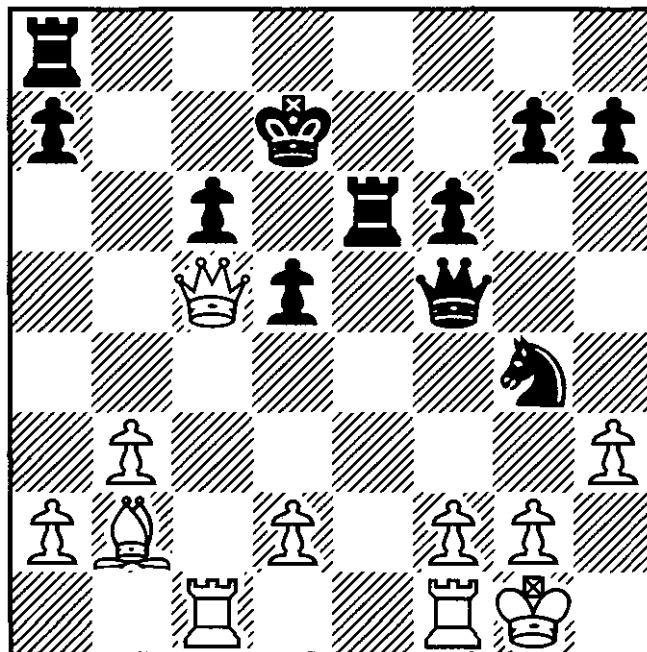


Exercise: Which pieces does Black need to exchange and which pieces must he try to keep on the board? How should he to execute it? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White is clearly threatening to play 18 Nc5+. Black can defend passively but it is better to play actively and make threats of his own. In this position, Black can make threats against White's king with 17...Qf4, which forces either 18 g3 or 18 Qg3. I think the former is more likely, when Black can play 18...Qb4 trying to exchange queens again.

Boris: In the case of a queen exchange, Black will be alright and his king in the center will be an asset rather than a liability. Black could execute a queen exchange by 17...Qe5! 18 Qh3+ Qf5 and White has to trade queens or agree on a draw by repetition. In your line, after 17...Qf4 White has 18 Nc5+ and Black has to play an unfavorable middlegame. Your idea to exchange queens was correct but the execution was inaccurate.

17...Ng4?! 18 Nc5+ Bxc5 19 Qxc5 Rhe8 20 Rac1 Re6 21 h3!



Joel: Why is that such a good move?

Boris: With this move White fulfils his plan of exchanging minor pieces and to play the position with just queens and rooks.

Boris: The attractive idea of attacking the a7-pawn was worse: 21 Rc4?! Ne5 22 Ra4 (White would lose after 22 Rb4? Nd3 23 Rb7+? Kc8) 22...Nd3 23 Rxa7+ Rxa7 24 Qxa7+ Ke8 and because of the excellent position of the knight on d3, Black has good compensation for the pawn.

21...Ne5 22 Bxe5 fxe5?!

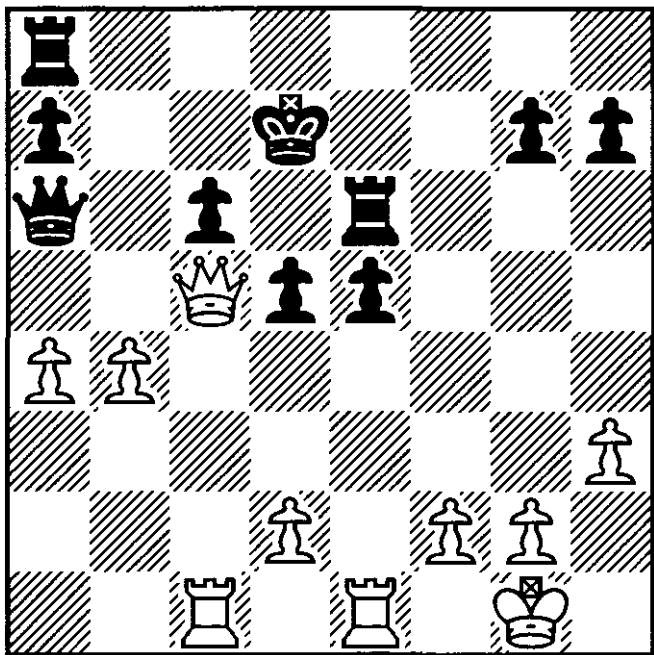
Lessons with a Grandmaster

Boris: More stubborn was 22...Qxe5 23 b4 Qd6 24 Qa5 Qc7 25 Qa4 when White has strong pressure on Black's position.

23 b4 Qd3 24 Rfe1! Qa6

Boris: Black doesn't have 24...a6 because of 25 Rxe5.

25 a4



25...Qb7

Boris: 25...Qb6! was better, but after 26 b5 White retains a big advantage in the rook endgame.

Joel: Why?

Boris: Because the black pawns are hanging and White's rooks are more active.

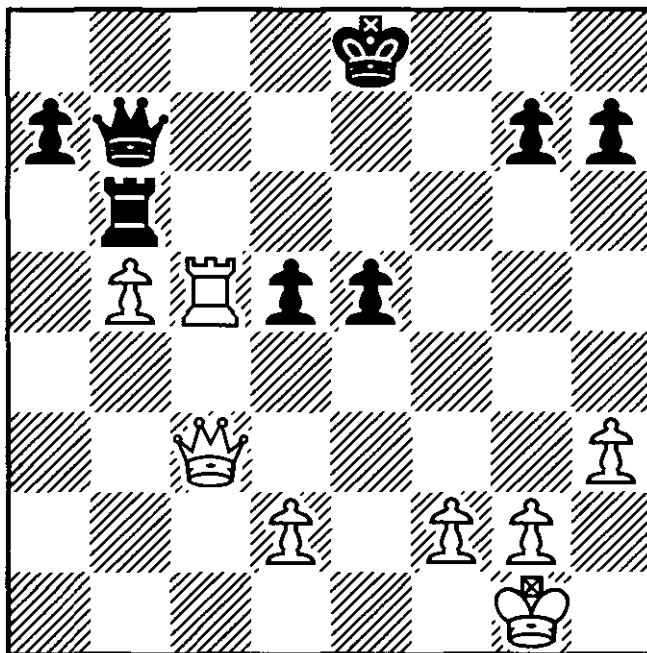
26 b5 cxb5 27 axb5 Rc8 28 Qa3 Rxc1 29 Rxc1 Ke8 30 Rc5 Rb6 31 Qc3

(see following diagram)

31...d4

Boris: My opponent was in time pressure, but 31...Re6 32 Rc7 Qxb5 33 Rxg7 was also hopeless.

32 Rxe5+ 1-0



Joel: I think the principle of exchanging minor pieces when the opponent's king is stuck in the middle of the board was an important lesson. Leaving minor pieces on the board allows Black counterplay and defensive resources.

Boris: Yes, you're right. The main topic of this game is how to make the right exchanges. In positional games, you have to figure out which pieces to retain and which pieces to exchange. White understood the correct plan of exchanging minor pieces and leaving major pieces on the board. Black lost because he did not realize the same. His only real mistake was on move seventeen when he did not figure out the necessity of exchanging queens.

Game Nine
B.Gulko-J.Hector
Copenhagen 2000
English Opening

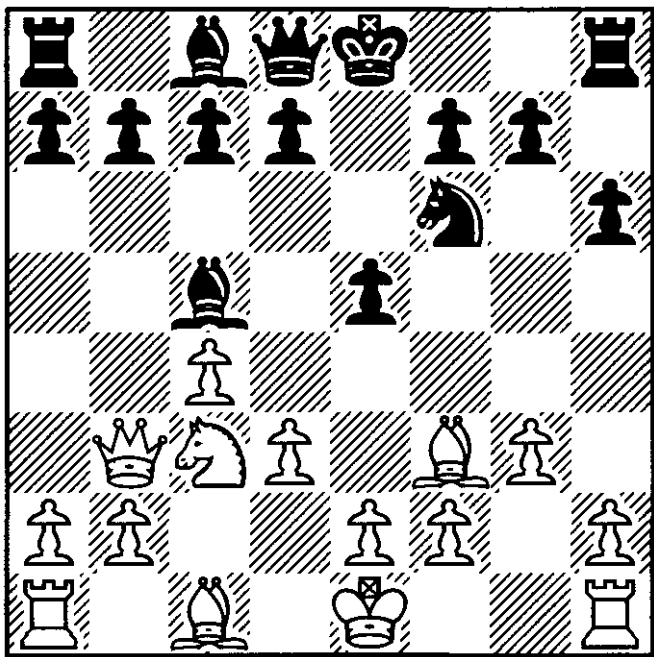
Boris: In this game I want to discuss with you the very difficult-to-assess question of changing plans. Usually for players it is very difficult to stop a plan they were working on and switch to something entirely different. Playing in the opening c2-c4 and g2-g3, White decides that he plans to play on the queenside with Ra1, b2-b4-b5, and so on. The variation Black plays in this game is very solid. It is very difficult for White to execute the usual English opening plan.

1 c4 Nf6 2 Nc3 e5 3 Nf3 Nc6 4 g3 Nd4

Joel: What about 4...Nxe5 - ?

Boris: After 5 Nxe5 Qe7 6 f4 d6 7 Nd3 Bf5 Black has excellent compensation. Not many people playing White would be willing to suffer like this for just a pawn.

5 Bg2 Nxf3+ 6 Bxf3 Bb4 7 Qb3 Bc5 8 d3 h6



Exercise: Find an aggressive plan and how to execute it. (difficulty level 5)

Joel: I don't have a good sense of what White's plan needs to be in this position. I would have thought queenside expansion with the idea of making it difficult for Black to develop his queenside, but White blocked the b-pawn with Qb3 so that doesn't make sense. Going after the bishop pair makes good positional sense but it is hardly aggressive. Black's last move wasted time. Instead of developing his pieces, he took time out to prevent Bc1-g5; however, the position is closed so this waste of time may not matter. The one thought I have is that Black is very likely to castle kingside because (among other things) White's queen and light-squared bishop are aiming at b7. Therefore, it might make sense to postpone castling in favor of creating threats against Black's kingside. The strange move 9 Be3 suggests itself (although I think I would not be able to convince myself to play this in a game). The idea is that White (after 9...Bxe3 10 fxe3) creates a strong center, threatens to expand, and opens the f-file for his rooks. White can decide where to castle later.

Boris: You're right that the usual plan in the English of pushing the b-pawn with b2-b4-b5 is difficult to execute here. Black is ready to restrict White's light-squared bishop with the move ...c7-c6; and in the case of castling kingside, White would have to lose a tempo with Bf3-g2. All of these considerations create the reputation for this variation that it is very safe for Black.

However, with his next move, 9 h4!, White starts a new plan, a pawn storm on the kingside, which is very unusual for the English. Interestingly, the factor that supports this pawn storm is the bishop on f3. What would have been the drawback of this bishop's placement in the case of 9 0-0 is now an asset supporting a kingside pawn storm. Another factor that helps White is Black's move 8...h6, which you justifiably criticized. After this game, the move 8...h6, which was common before, disappeared from practice.

What is the purpose of White's pawn storm before Black has castled kingside? First, it gives White the opportunity to exchange kingside rooks and, after this, the main factor becomes which side will be able to bring the queenside rook into action. Second, White intends to push the f6-knight from its best square.

After your 9 Be3, Black can exchange, which would give White doubled pawns in the center. Doubled pawns can be good for defensive purposes because the pawns cover many squares. However, your intention was to expand in the center, and for this doubled pawns are not good.

Joel: Very interesting! I did not even consider 9 h4, probably because I was trying to think along English lines and a kingside pawn storm is very unusual. There is a

relevant psychological concept called “functional fixedness”, which is a cognitive bias that limits us from using an object in other ways than that for which it was designed. It is like a mental block that prevents us from using an object in a new way, a way that is required to solve a problem.

Boris: That’s a very appropriate psychological explanation.

9 h4!

Boris: It would be less precise to start White’s plan with 9 g4 because after 9...d6 the pawn is already hanging. After 9 h4, White’s plan is not so obvious and it is useful to keep your opponent in the dark about your plans as long as possible. In this position, White usually castled kingside but had not obtained an advantage.

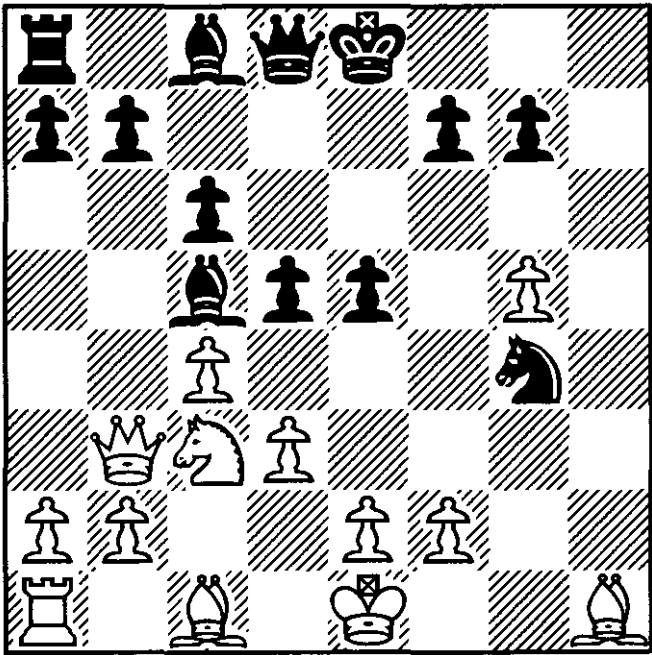
9...c6

Boris: Here 9...d6? is bad because of 10 Bxb7 winning a pawn.

10 g4 d5

Boris: Counterattacking in the center in response to an attack on the flank. In the case of the quiet 10...d6 11 g5 (11 Rg1 doesn’t promise White anything after 11...Qb6 12 Qxb6 Bxb6) 11...hxg5 12 hxg5 Rxh1+ 13 Bxh1 Ng4 14 Ne4 Bb6 15 Qa3 Bc7 16 Bd2, White would threaten 17 Bb4 attacking Black’s pawn chain.

11 g5 hxg5 12 hxg5 Rxh1+ 13 Bxh1 Ng4



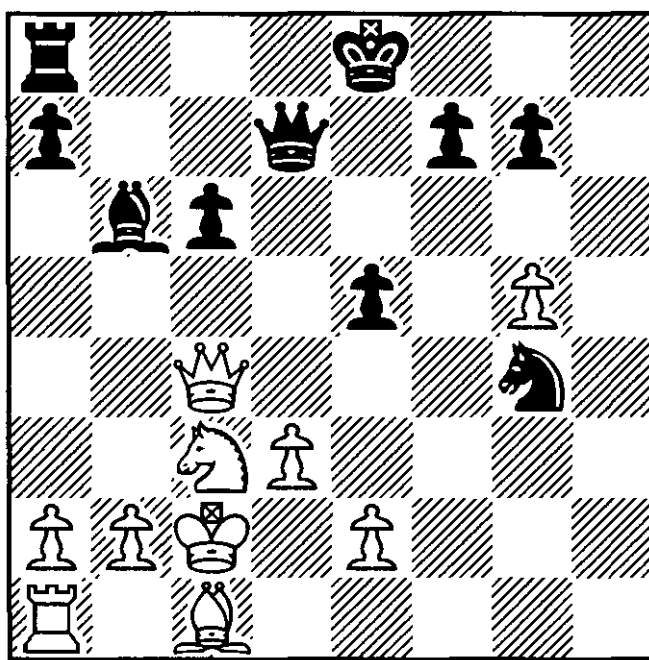
Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I think this is extremely risky but I don't see good alternatives. I think White needs to open the position and try to take advantage of Black's king sitting in the center. Although Black can take on f2 with tempo, White will open up the long diagonal for his bishop. Therefore, I would play 14 cxd5.

Boris: Very good! Here the check on f2 doesn't create any problems for White's king. It will be safe on c2 and White's rook will join the battle.

14 cxd5! Bxf2+ 15 Kd1 Bb6 16 Kc2 Bd7 17 dxc6 bxc6!

Boris: The game continuation is better than 17...Bxc6 18 Bxc6+ bxc6 19 Qc4 Qd7 and now:



Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I like 20 g6. Black cannot push or take because of 21 Qg8+ winning the rook. This will give Black five isolated and weak pawn islands to attack.

Boris: Very good! The correct answer is 20 g6!.

18 Bd2 Be3 19 Rf1 Qe7 20 Ne4!

Boris: White creates the threat of 21 Rxf7 Qxf7 22 Nd6+. Worse was 20 g6?! f6 and Black gets rid of his weakness on f7.

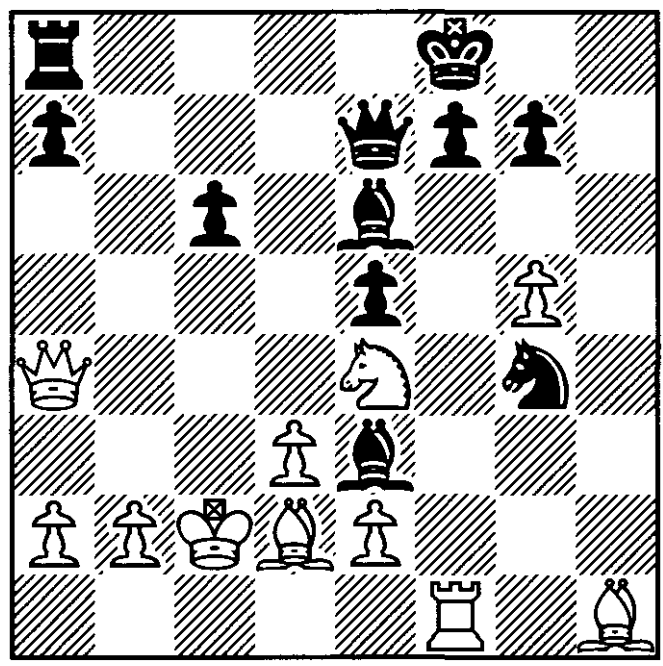
20...Be6?!

Boris: The immediate exchange was more precise: 20...Bxd2 21 Kxd2 Be6 22 Qa4

Rc8 with better prospects for White.

21 Qa4 Kf8

Boris: Black has to move his king. Both 21...Rc8 22 Bb4 and 21...Rb8 22 Bf3 Bxd2 23 Rh1 Qb4 24 Rh8+ Ke7 25 Qxa7+ Rb7 26 Qc5+ Qxc5+ 27 Nxc5 Rb4 28 Nxe6 Kxe6 29 Kxd2 were bad for Black.



Exercise: What should White’s plan be? How to execute it? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I would like to trade off Black’s dark-squared bishop. For this I need to force Black to take on d2. I think 22 Bf3 forces this exchange and also allows White to make use of the open h-file.

Boris: Your suggestion is good but for the second reason you mentioned. Forcing the exchange of dark-squared bishops is not White’s plan.

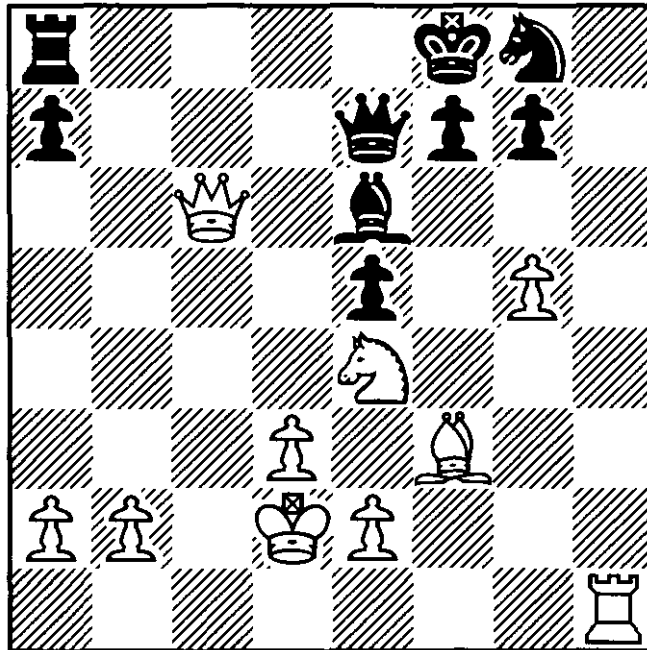
22 Bf3! Bxd2 23 Rh1!

Boris: White’s starts a direct attack on the king.

23...Nh6!?

Boris: Probably more stubborn was 23...Kg8! 24 Kxd2 Rd8 25 Bxg4 (White could also keep a solid advantage with 25 b3!?) 25...Bxg4 26 Nf6+ gxf6 27 Qxg4 fxg5 28 Rh5 f6 29 Qh3 Qg7 30 Qe6+ Kf8 31 Rh1 and Black’s king is in danger.

24 Kxd2 Ng8 25 Qxc6



25...Qb4+

Boris: After 25...Rc8 26 Qd6 Bxa2 27 Ra1 Bb3 28 Rxa7 White would have a winning endgame.

26 Qc3 a5 27 Nc5 Qf4+ 28 Kd1 Re8 29 Nxe6+ Rxe6 30 Qc5+ Re7 31 Rh8 1-0

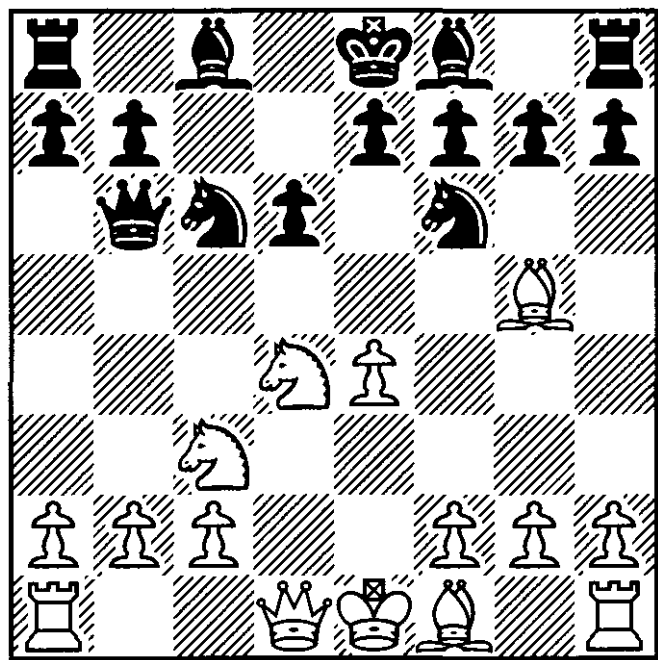
Joel: I think the notion of functional fixedness is quite important. As I am realizing more and more, you are able to use rules and principles in a flexible way, whereas I tend to use them in a fixed way, which prevents me seeing the relative value of different rules as they interact in a given position and from solving problems in creative ways. I think this game is an excellent example of flexible thinking.

Boris: I think the most interesting feature of this game was the unusual change of plans. Instead of the usual English plan of playing on the queenside, White played as if in an open Sicilian. White's motivation behind this plan was also interesting. I did not intend to give mate to Black's king but to exchange kingside rooks and achieve an advantage because of the better mobility of my queenside rook. It is also interesting that White's king was completely safe in the center.

Game Ten
A.Suetin-B.Gulko
Moscow 1972
Sicilian Defense

Boris: Suetin was a very good theoretician and the long-time trainer of Petrosian. His drawback was that he was not very good at strategical play (relatively speaking of course). Therefore, my goal was to create a strategically unusual position. Positions with doubled and weak pawns are an excellent example of this, which is the theme of this game.

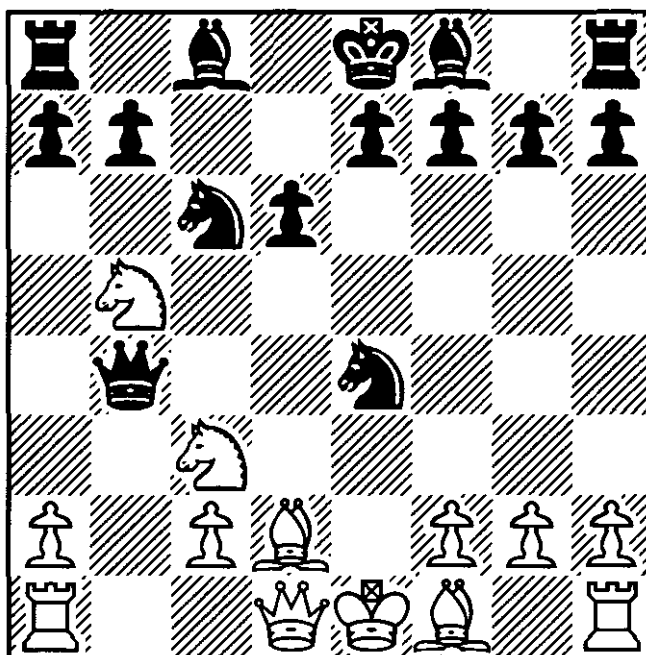
1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 d6 6 Bg5 Qb6



7 Nb3

Boris: The variation 6...Qb6 was my favorite in those days. Because of my good results with it, 6...Qb6 started to gain popularity and other strong GMs became interested in it. Lev Polugaevsky once came to me and said, “You play an interesting variation with 6...Qb6. I would like to analyze it with you.” Alas, the variation was dealt a heavy blow in 1975 after my game with Yuri Balashov during the USSR Championship in Yerevan. Although I won, the variation did not really return to top-level chess until 14 years later. In that game, Balashov played 7 Be3! (Vito-

linsh's idea) 7...Qxb2 8 Ndb5 (8 Ncb5 has been recommended but it is bad because of 8...Qb4+ 9 Bd2 Qa4!) 8...Qb4 9 Bd2! Nxe4.



Here Balashov played 10 Rb1? and after 10...Nxc3 11 Bxc3 Qc5 12 Qd2 Kd8! 13 Be2 e5! received a losing position. Later it was found that 10 a3! wins on the spot. New ideas were introduced in the game S.Dolmatov-K.Spraggett (Hastings 1989/90) where Black played 9...Qc5! and a draw was agreed after 10 Be3 Qb4 11 Bd2 Qc5. Until now, no one has checked Black's idea in the wild variation 10 Nc7+ Kd8 11 Nxa8 Ng4 12 Qb1 Qxf2+ 13 Kd1.

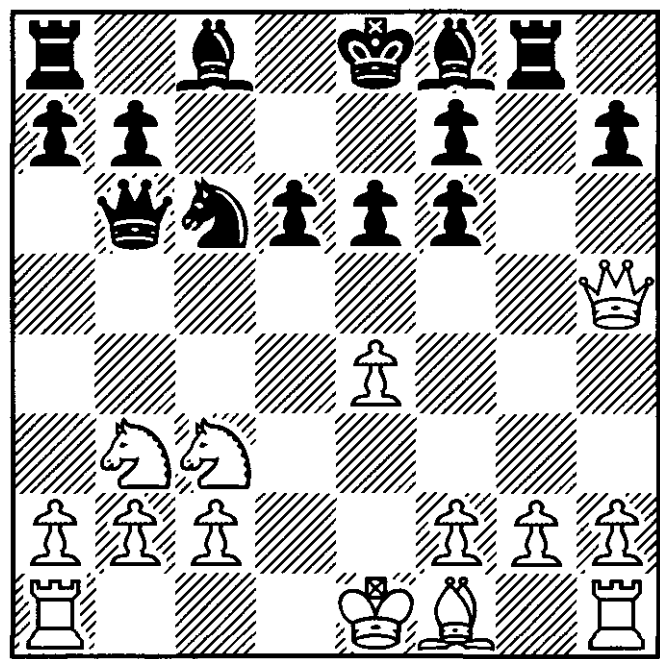
7...e6 8 Bxf6

Boris: In the same Hastings tournament where Spraggett introduced his idea with 9...Qc5, Speelman played the strong 8 Bf4! Ne5 9 Be3 Qc7 10 f4 Nc6 against me, and White lost with the moves of his bishop one tempo less than Black lost with the moves of his knight and queen.

8...gxf6 9 Qh5 Rg8!?

Boris: A psychological blow! White tried to restrict the movement of Black's rook on h8 by giving it the unenviable defensive task of protecting the h7-pawn. Black, however, answered resolutely: "I do not care about this pawn." In turn, Black restricts the movement of White's f1-bishop which now needs to protect the g2-pawn. How the tables have turned. The pawn on h7 is insignificant in these kinds of positions. Strategically, this position has a slight similarity with the Benko Gambit where Black gives up the a- and b-pawns to have open files for his pieces.

Here Black gives up a pawn to open the g- and h-files.



10 Qxh7 Rg6

Boris: Threatening to give a “perpetual check” to White’s queen via the h6- and g6-squares.

11 Qh5 Bd7 12 Qb5

Boris: Suetin was an active chess player and, consistent with his style, chose an aggressive continuation. He pushes Black’s queen back and prepares 13 f4 (gaining control of the e5-square) and only then will he develop his bishop to g2. If he had reversed the order and started with 12 g3 Black could play 12...Ne5, when Black’s knight eyes not only the c4-square after 13 Bg2 but also g4 in the case of 13 f4.

12...Qc7 13 Qe2 a6 14 f4

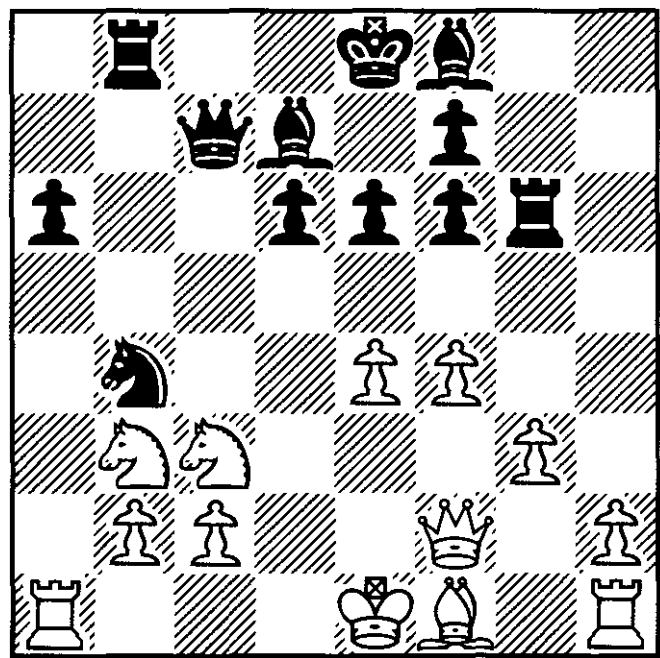
Boris: And now 14 g3 b5 15 Bg2 Ne5 16 f4 makes the very sensitive c4-square available for the knight.

14...b5 15 a3 Rb8 16 g3

Boris: 16 0-0-0 b4 promises Black significant counterplay as well.

16...b4! 17 axb4 Nxb4 18 Qf2

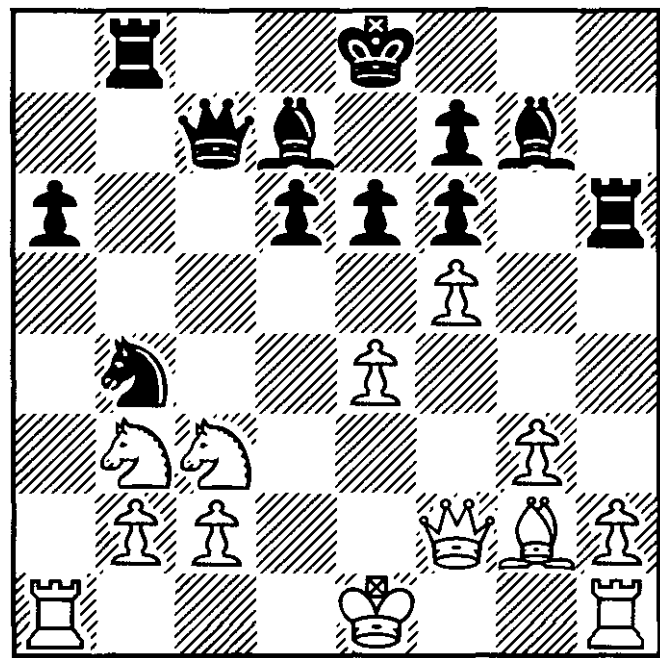
Boris: White is preparing to castle and bring his king to safety. The immediate 18 Bg2 Qb6! wouldn’t have solved this problem because of the weakness on c2.



18...Bg7 19 f5

Boris: Avoiding 19 Bg2 f5 when the bishop on g7 enters the battle.

19...Rh6 20 Bg2



Exercise: How to prevent White from finishing development? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I looked at three moves. 20...Nd3+ does not prevent White from castling after 21 cxd3 Rxb3 22 O-O. Actually, Black has helped White complete development and

strengthen his center. The move 20...Nxc2+ seems to just lose a piece, but 20...Qc4 is interesting. If White responds with 21 Na5, Black has 21...Qd4!.

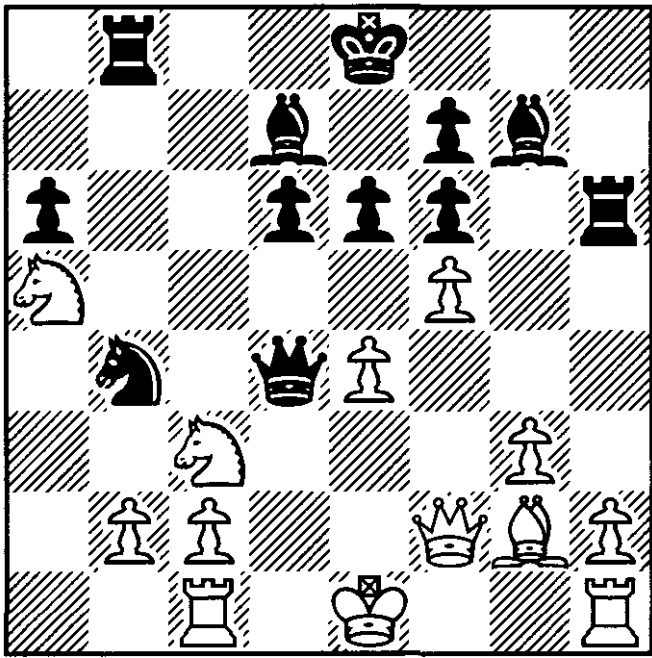
Boris: Very good! This is exactly what happened in the game. I'm glad you saw this maneuver.

20...Qc4!

Boris: Castling is still impossible. Suetin put his hopes on the next move.

21 Na5 Qd4! 22 Rc1

Boris: Now 22 O-O permits 22...Nxc2.



22...Qxf2+

Joel: What about 22...Qe5 - ?

Boris: It is bad because White has only one move and it is a very good one: 23 Nc4, when Black's only move is 23...Qc5 and his position is much worse than in the game. Strangely enough, after the game continuation, Black has doubled and weak pawns, whereas White has a healthy pawn formation yet his position is worse.

Joel: Let me rephrase my question. I think what I am asking is how do you know when and when not to exchange pieces? How did you know to exchange queens rather than to try and keep queens on the board?

Boris: In this case it is actually very simple. First, Black cannot really avoid exchanging

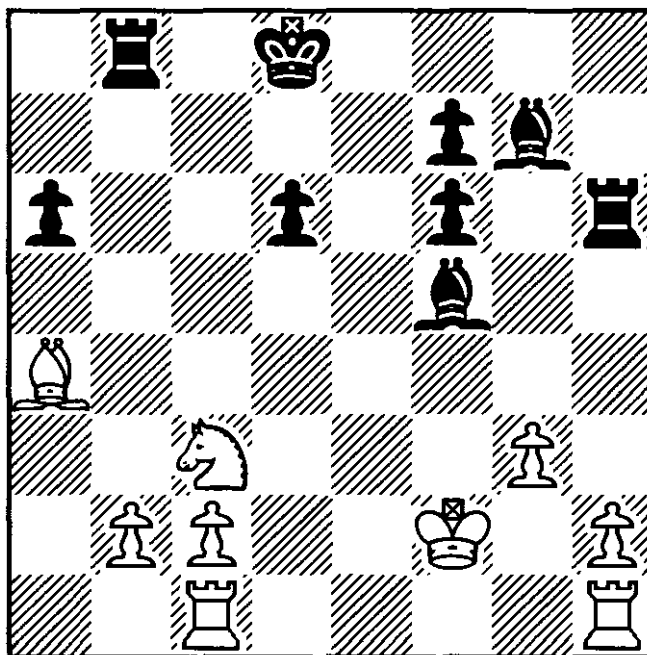
ing queens (other moves are worse). Second, Black regains a pawn. Third, the bishop pair often grows in strength in the endgame. Finally, White's king is well protected whereas Black's king is more vulnerable, so there is no reason to play a middlegame with queens on the board.

23 Kxf2 exf5 24 exf5

Boris: Inept. 24 Nc4 fxe4 25 Nxd6+ Ke7 26 Ndx e4 was better, although after 26...f5 and ...Bd4+ next move, Black would have an active position.

24...Bxf5 25 Nc6 Nxc6 26 Bxc6+ Kd8 27 Ba4

Boris: Suetin hoped to profit from Black's disfigured pawn structure. Suddenly with my next move Black starts the attack.



Exercise: Find the most aggressive move for Black. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I stared at this position for quite a long time and could not come up with anything “aggressive”. I was trying to use the fact that White's bishop has abandoned control of the h1-a8 diagonal. I looked at 27...d5 with the idea that 28 Nxd5 Be4 forks the knight and the rook, but after 28 Rcd1, I think Black's position is falling apart. The only other move I could come up with was 27...Be6 with the threat of 28...Rxb2.

Boris: This position is interesting because all of Black's pawns are weak and doubled. Because of the open files and diagonals created by these weak and doubled pawns, however, Black probably has a decisive advantage. It is interesting that you

noticed that White's bishop left the long diagonal but you couldn't find a way to use it. The way to use it is to return it to its starting position: 27...Bc8!.

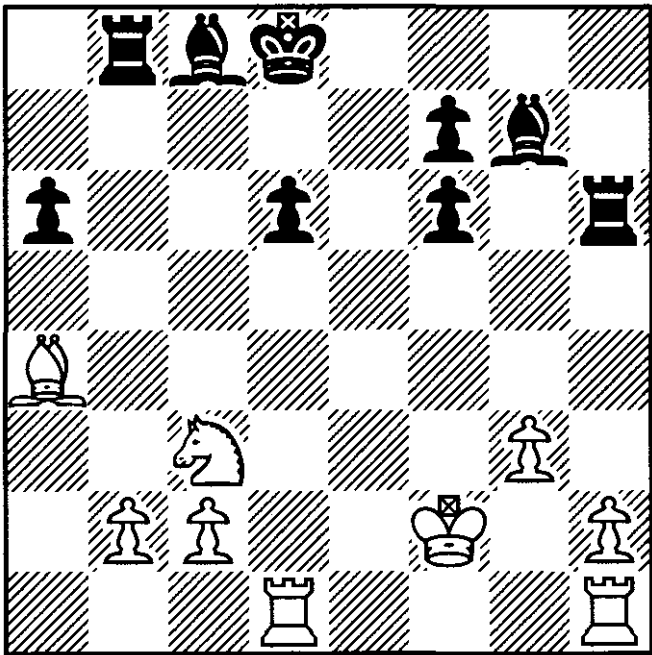
Joel: Perhaps I missed this move because the bishop retreats? I have noticed that when the position demands retreating or moving backwards these moves are harder to see. The move seems so obvious once you say "White's bishop has left the long diagonal". There is really only one move that can make use of that.

Boris: Yes, it is a rule of chess perception that retreats and backward moves are harder to see.

27...Bc8!

Boris: All of Black's attacking moves in this game have a very modest appearance. Black creates a threat to the h2-pawn after 28...Bb7. Worse was 27...Rxb2 28 Bb3 and 29 Na4.

28 Rcd1



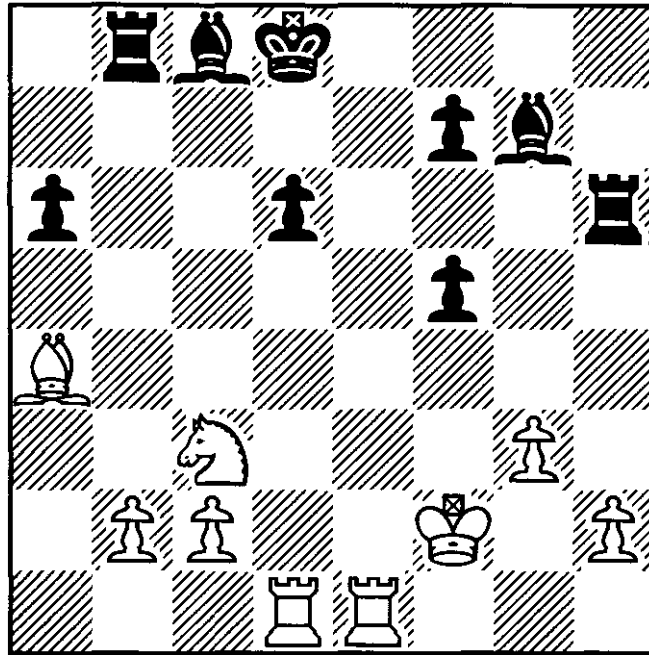
Exercise: What is the best move? (difficulty level 2)

28...f5!

Boris: The move 28...f5! makes use of the rook on h6 for defense as well as attack. It also has the added benefit that Black's dark-squared bishop comes to life.

29 Rhe1

Boris: Still trying to fight for the initiative. In the case of 29 Bb3 Bb7 30 Nd5 Bxb2 he simply would lose the pawn.



Exercise: Again, can you find a move for Black that both attacks and defends? (difficulty level 2)

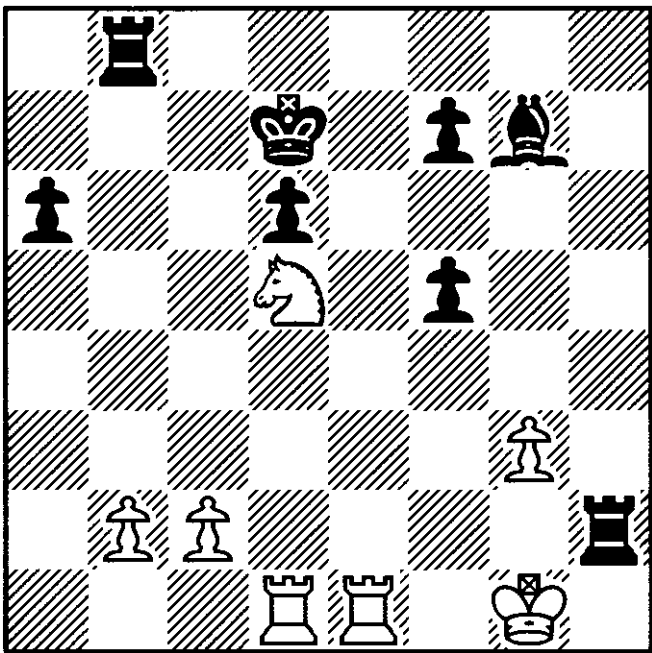
Joel: White threatens 30 Re8+ with dire consequences. I looked at several moves but none were satisfying. For example, 29...Rxb2 allows 30 Re8+ followed by 31 Nd5+ perhaps. 29...Be6 allows 30 Rxd6+. Finally, I came upon 29...Be5 defending d6 and attacking White's kingside and "played it immediately", only to realize that it loses on the spot. I calculated a lot but couldn't find anything.

Boris: You did not solve the problem because it is a very complicated psychological moment. Having the two bishops, we usually try to keep them, but as Bronstein said, one of the advantages of having the bishop pair is that you can exchange one of the bishops at the appropriate moment. After the game continuation – actually the most natural move, but psychologically difficult to come up with – White's initiative evaporates.

29...Bd7!

Boris: After this move, which simultaneously attacks and defends, White's position suddenly falls to pieces.

30 Bxd7 Kxd7 31 Nd5 Rxh2+ 32 Kg1

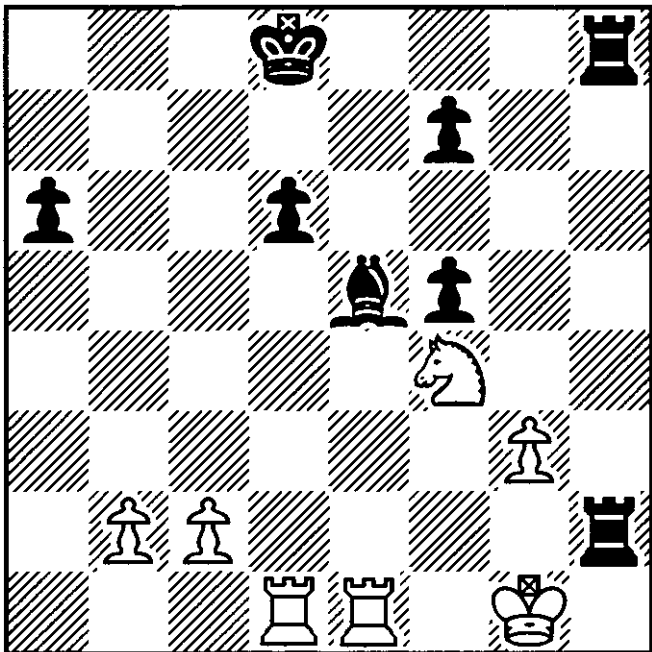


Exercise: How does Black handle his rooks? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: 32...Rxc2 is natural but allows 33 Re7+. Therefore, Black should play 32...Rbh8.

Boris: Very good! After this move White's rooks cannot leave the first rank for long and Suetin soon finds himself in zugzwang.

32...Rbh8! 33 Re7+ Kd8 34 Ree1 Be5 35 Nf4



Exercise: Find the best way for Black. (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I like 35...Rh1+, getting rid of some pieces. After 36 Kf2 Rxe1 37 Rxe1 (37 Kxe1 allows further exchanges) 37...Rh2+ all of White's pawns are vulnerable.

Boris: I don't like the move 35...Rh1+ because it diminishes Black's advantage (although it is still probably winning). White's position is completely hopeless and Black can demonstrate that with a simple king move. After the game continuation, White doesn't have any reasonable moves.

Joel: Aren't we taught to simplify and go into winning endgames if we can. It is the easiest way, no? You decide to keep pieces on the board.

Boris: I don't think exchanging pieces is the easiest way here. Generally, the best move is better than all the rest. In your line, White can play 38 Kf3 Rxc2 39 Ra1, and in spite of two extra pawns, you have to play accurately to win. It is still a struggle. After 35...Kc8, my opponent can resign. He is essentially in zugzwang. If your opponent is in zugzwang, don't help him out if it. Let him make his position worse.

35...Kc8!

Boris: One more modest attacking move! Now White loses another pawn.

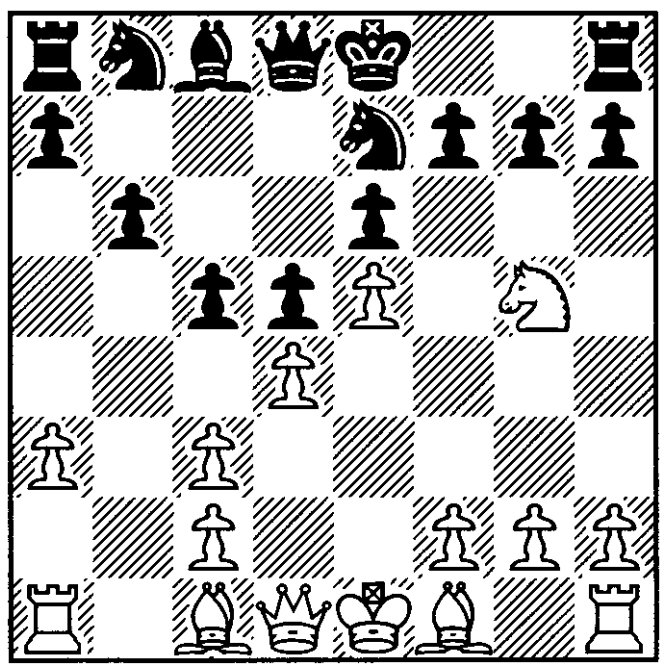
36 Ne2 Bxb2 37 c3 a5! 38 Rb1 a4 39 Rxb2 Rh1+ 40 Kf2 R8h2+ 41 Kf3 Rxe1 0-1

Joel: I think there are two important lessons for me in this game. The first is in trying to solve the position after White's 29 Rhe1, I calculated a lot but couldn't find anything. After some time, I came across 29...Be5 and "played it" instantly, not giving it the same consideration as I did the other moves. Perhaps I was tired and just decided to play something. I think this is a common problem and I have recognized it in my tournament games. The other lesson is how you handled the endgame. In winning positions, I tend to become passive, trying all the time to exchange pieces and go into an endgame. I know that is not a bad idea in general but what you have shown is that some exchanges are better than others.

Boris: I'm glad you are taking from this game such valuable lessons. What I think this game illustrates is that chess rules are relative. Doubled and weak pawns can be useful because they leave open diagonals and files and this game demonstrates that very clearly. Also, the rule of exchanging pieces when you have the advantage is also relative. I would recommend not to exchange your better pieces for those of your opponent's that are worse and so reduce your advantage. When you have two rooks that are paralyzing the opponent, why exchange them? Because Black has doubled pawns on the f-file, this structural advantage could allow White to fight for a draw.

Game Eleven
B.Gulko-O.Panno
Vina del Mar 1988
French Defense

1 d4 e6 2 e4 d5 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 Bxc3+ 6 bxc3 Ne7 7 Nf3 b6 8 Ng5



Boris: In the years after immigration, I was in correspondence with Korchnoi, and in one of the letters he wrote, he mentioned that 8 Ng5 (which was played by Andrei Sokolov in the decisive game of the candidates match against Artur Yusupov) refutes this variation. I didn't analyze the line because in these years I stopped playing 1 e4. After this game, I realized that, among the many opportunities for White's eighth move, 8 Ng5 is far from the best.

Joel: There is a lot of theory in the French. How did you decide to play 2 e4 in this game?

Boris: I played the French as Black, so if you understand the ideas you can play it without preparing concrete variations.

Joel: What was the context of this game?

Boris: It was a double round robin tournament of four grandmasters in Chile, in-

cluding Ljubojevic, Panno, Morovic (the brightest young Chilean player at the time) and myself.

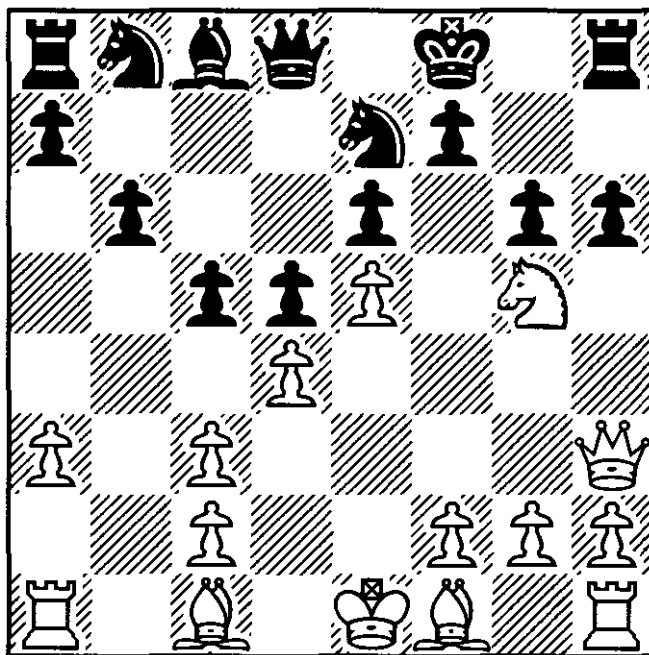
8...h6 9 Qh5 g6

Boris: It was risky to play 9...0-0 10 Nf3 f5 because White has the dangerous plan of g2-g4.

Joel: Why is this dangerous? Doesn't it weaken White as much as Black?

Boris: White will have a weak pawn on f2 but Black will have a weak king, which is more important.

10 Qh3 Kf8



Boris: Yusupov played 10...Qc7. Panno chooses a safe plan and obtains a solid position.

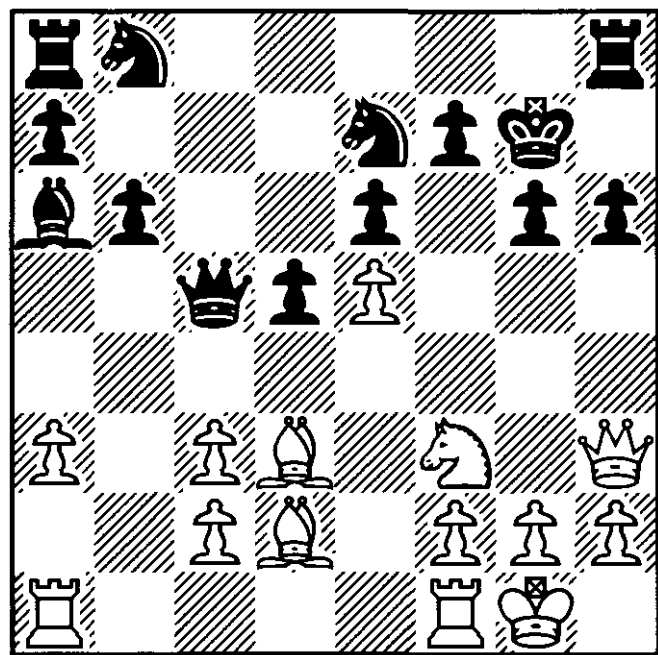
11 Bd3 Kg7 12 Nf3 Ba6 13 dxc5

Boris: I didn't like 13 0-0 Bxd3 because Black has ...c5-c4 at some point, obtaining control of the light squares.

13...Qc7

Boris: Of course it was possible to play 13...bxc5, but Black wanted to have an open file against White's weak pawns.

14 0-0 Qxc5 15 Bd2



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Material is even. White has a strong pawn on e5, which supports a kingside attack because the black knight cannot occupy f6. White has nicely posted pieces all aiming at the kingside and Black is behind in development. I would say White has the advantage. If Black does nothing what will White play? I ask this question in order to determine what Black needs to defend against. In this position, candidate moves for White are 16 Nd4 (blocking the queen, creating potential threats against e6, and setting up f2-f4), 16 Kh1 (preparing f2-f4 by getting out of the pin), and 16 Qh4 (threatening Qf6+). Therefore, it makes sense to me for Black to play 15...g5 with the idea of ...Ng6 and ...Qe7.

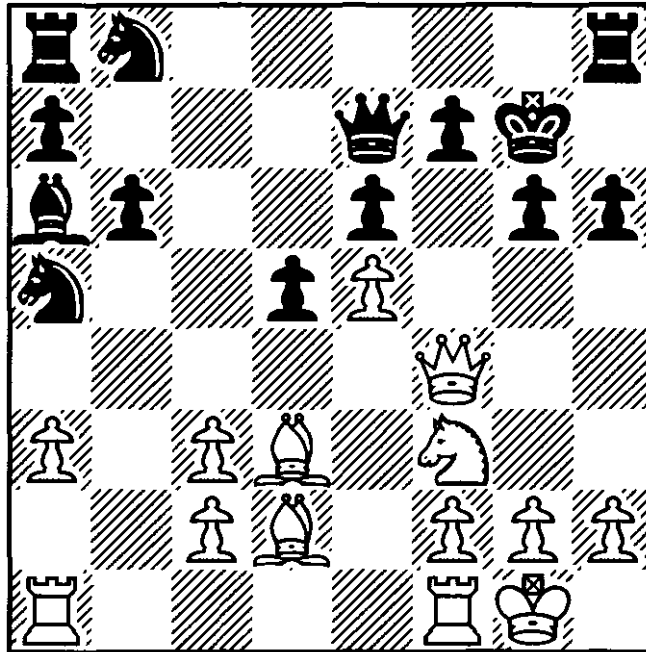
Boris: 15...g5 is simply a bad move because it weakens Black's kingside too much. For example, White has 16 Qg4 followed by h2-h4 and Black's kingside will be destroyed. White has weak pawns but a strong dark-squared bishop. The real task for Black here is to determine which piece should occupy the weak c4-square. In my opinion, my opponent solved this problem incorrectly because he decided to bring his knight to c4, after which Black's pieces begin to interfere with each other (the knight restricts the bishop).

15...Nec6?!

Boris: After Black plays the correct 15...Bc4! and develops the knight on b8 to d7, the position would be approximately equal.

16 Qh4 Qe7 17 Qf4 Na5

Boris: By playing 17...Na5, it looks like Black overestimated his position, hoping to take advantage of White's weak pawns. 17...Bxd3 18 cxd3 Nd7 was better, when the position is close to equal.



Exercise: What is the best way for White? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: Black controls the c4-square and intends 18...Nc4. However, by moving the knight away from the kingside, Black weakens control over f5 and g6; therefore I would play 18 g4.

Boris: White's chances for an advantage are connected to his strong dark-squared bishop. His first task then is to save this bishop from being exchanged. The black knight, although it will be placed beautifully on c4 will also be badly placed, so it is to White's advantage to lure the knight to c4. If I had played 18 g4? (or any other move practically) Black can reply 18...Bxd3 19 cxd3 Nb3 19 Ra2 Nxd2, when White's position will be worse because of the weak pawns.

18 Be3! Nc4?!

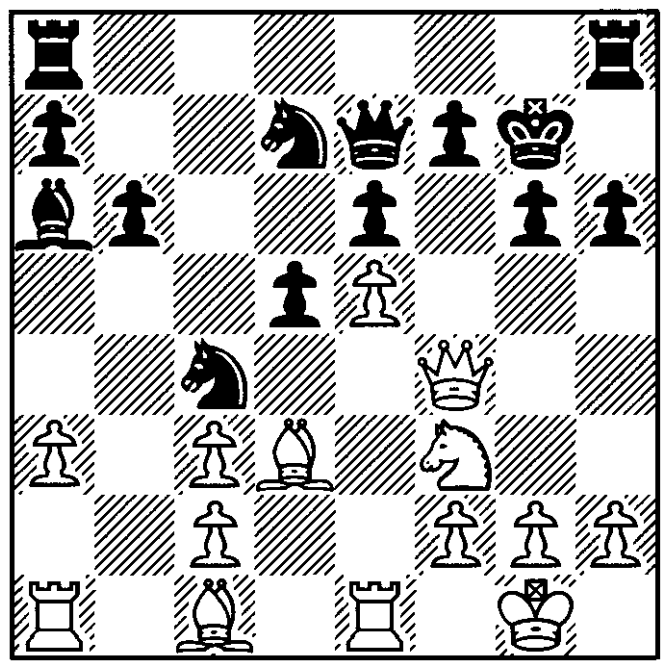
Boris: Black follows White's provocation, but the knight on c4 is poorly placed.

19 Bc1!

Joel: I was thinking on the previous move about 18 Rae1 so that the bishop could come back to c1 and not block in the rook.

Boris: But in this case the a3-pawn might hang in some lines and I am not sure the queen's rook is needed on e1. In this case, the rook on f1 will not have any prospects. This is a matter of the coordination of your pieces. It is important to give work to all of them.

19...Nd7 20 Re1



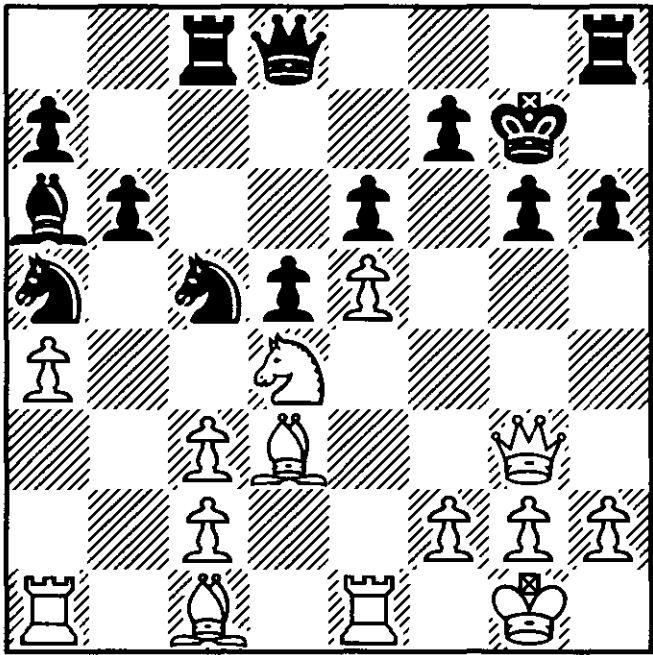
Boris: A prophylactic move against ...f7-f6. In the case of 20 a4, the move 20...f6 would be a reasonable continuation because it would release the pressure on the kingside and activate Black's pieces.

20...Rac8 21 a4 Qd8

Boris: Black is still dreaming about creating pressure on White's pawns with ...Qc7. More reasonable was 21...Nc5 22 Nd4 Na5! and Black can defend.

22 Nd4 Nc5 23 Qg3 Nxd3

Boris: Black exchanges his valuable knight on c5 for White's light-squared bishop. Now Black regrets not having made use of the opportunity on move 18 to exchange his useless bishop on a6 for White's light-squared bishop.

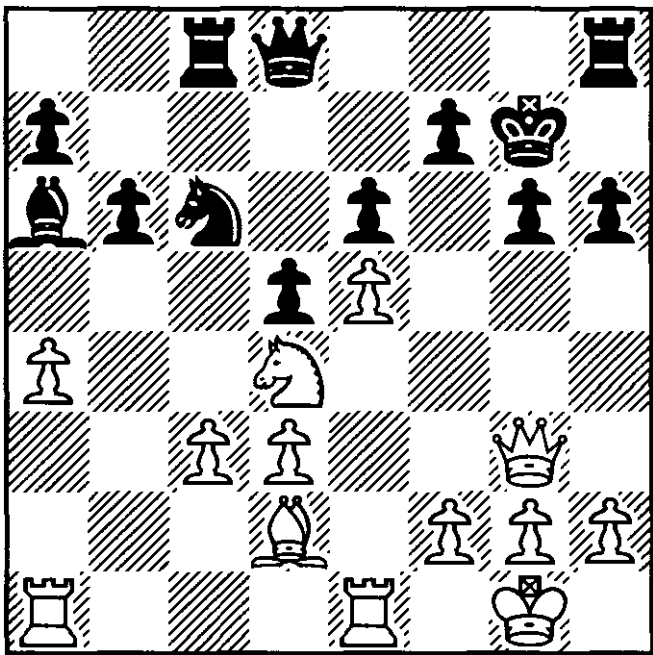


Exercise: 23...Na5 was now too late. Can you see why? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: After 23...Na5, I would play 24 Nb5 heading to d6, and if Black plays 24...Nb7 defending the d6-square, then 25 Ba3.

Boris: You missed a tactic. When the combination flows from the logic of the game, or as part of a planned combination, then we often find the critical moves more easily than if they come out of the blue. After 23...Na5 24 Nxe6+ is winning.

24 cxd3 Na5 25 Bd2 Nc6

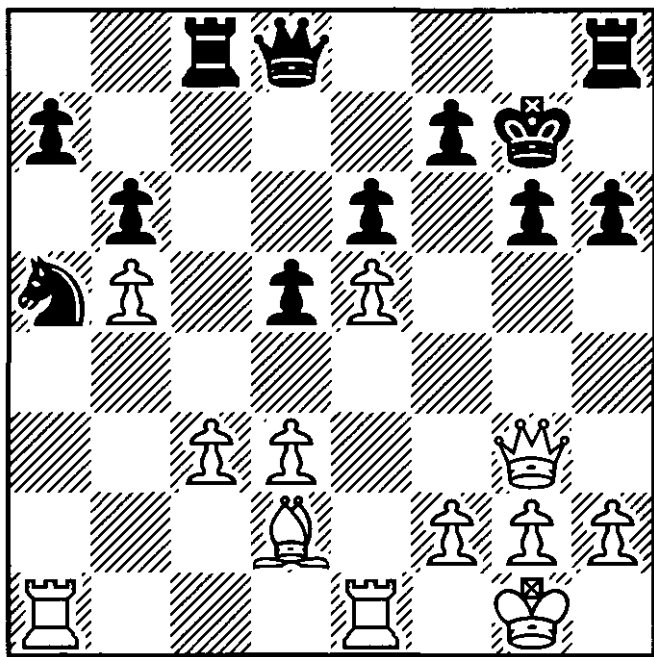


Exercise: What does White have to do here? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: I would play 26 Nb5 heading to d6. If Black takes on b5 then the a-pawn becomes very weak, whereas White's c-pawn is defended by the bishop.

Boris: Your consideration is correct. Because of the threat of penetrating on d6 Black has to take the knight and White's pawn structure is improved.

26 Nb5! Bxb5 27 axb5 Na5



Exercise: Which plan does White have to follow and how does he execute it? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I missed 27...Na5 in my previous analysis. Although the knight is out of play on the edge of the board, it blocks the a-file and threatens ...Nb3. I guess I would play 28 Ra3, defending b3 and setting up c3-c4.

28 Reb1!

Joel: A great move. It combines prophylaxis with attack because it deprives the knight of the b3-square and prepares Rb4, when the rook can join in the kingside attack.

Boris: Yes, you're correct. White's plan is to attack on the kingside, and to accomplish this goal White has to transfer his rooks to the kingside along the fourth rank.

28...Rc5 29 Rb4

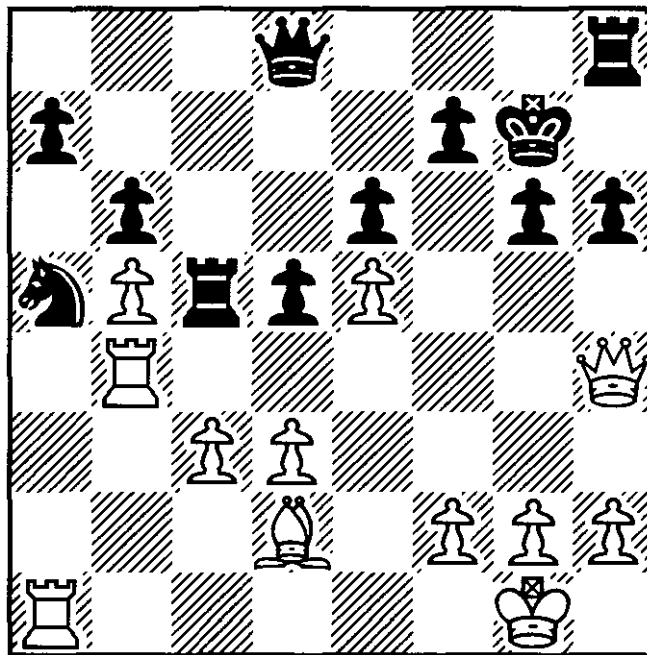
Boris: 29 Ra4 was more precise.

Joel: Why is this more precise?

Boris: Because when one of the rooks transfers to h4, the other will be more useful on b1 guarding b3.

29...Qc7 30 Qf4

Boris: Most straightforward was 30 Qh4, with the trap 30...Qd8? and then:



Exercise: White to play and win. (difficulty level 1)

Joel: I would play 31 Bxh6+.

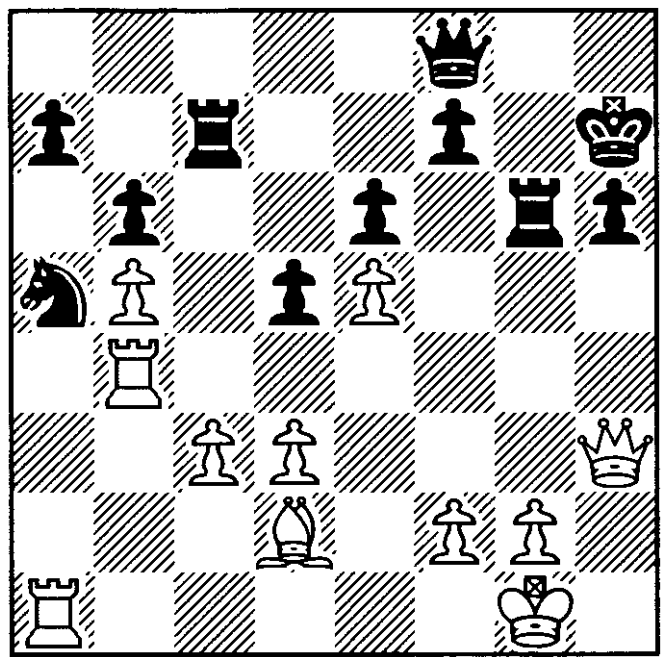
30...Qe7 31 h4 Rc7 32 Qg3 Kh7 33 Qf3 Kg7

Boris: Black is in a passive position and White, short on time, can allow himself not to hurry. The attempt to change the character of the position with 33...d4 was bad because of 34 c4, planning Rbb1.

34 Qf4 Qd8 35 Qg4 Kh7 36 h5 Rg8

Boris: 36...g5 was bad for Black because of 37 f4, when Black's kingside will be destroyed.

37 hxg6+ Rxc6 38 Qh3 Qf8



Exercise: How does White develop his attack? (difficulty level 2)

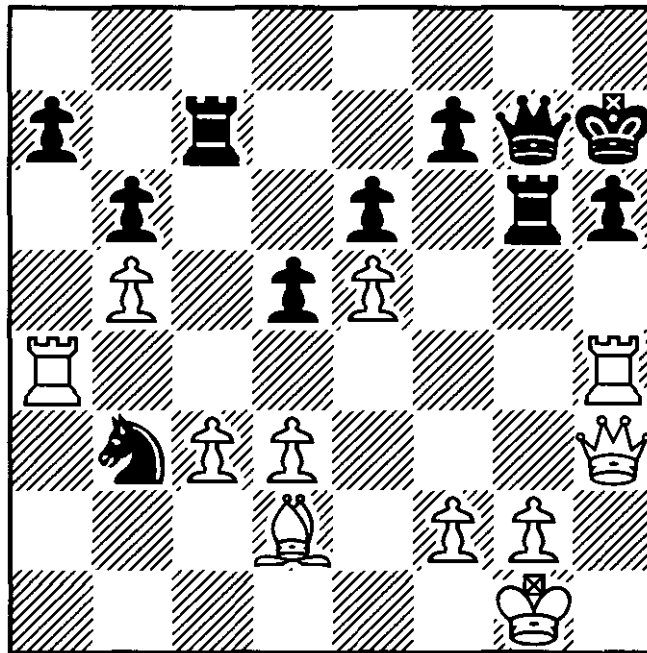
Joel: The problem is that the rook on b4 cannot immediately join in the kingside attack because of 40...Nb3. Therefore, White needs something creative. What about 39 g4 - ? White's pieces are in their best possible positions so I look for pawn breaks. However, the king is exposed now and the g-pawn is pinned anyway so maybe this is simply bad.

Boris: You're right, 39 g4 is bad, but the main reason it is bad is because it obstructs the activity of the rooks on the fourth rank. White has to position his second rook so that it can jump to the kingside at a moment's notice.

39 Raa4! Qg7

Boris: Black's last chance to muddy the waters was 39...d4!? 40 cxd4! (40 c4 Qg7 41 Rb1 Qxe5 was not so good) 40...Rc2 41 Be3 Qa8 42 d5! Qxd5 43 Rg4 and White is winning.

40 Rh4 Nb3



Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: I think Black was counting on 40...Nb3, but it seems to me that White can simply play 41 Bxh6! showing the strength of White's rook lift on move 39.

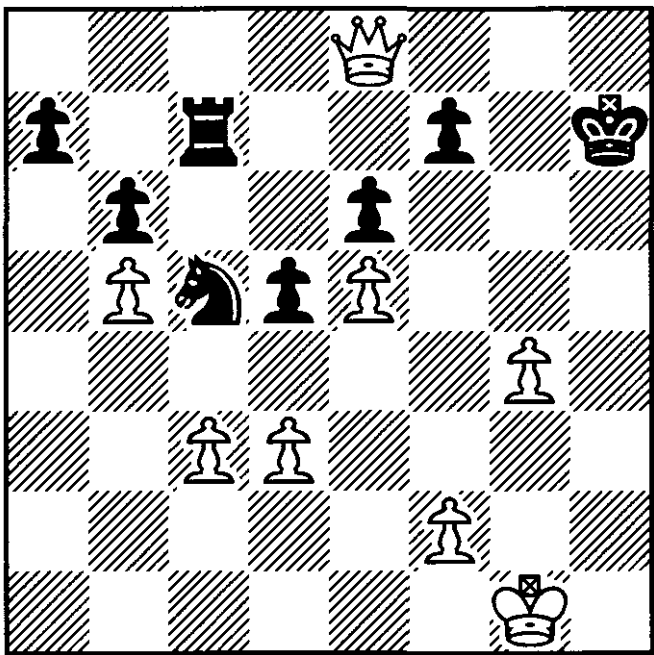
Boris: You're right. This also shows that it is easier to find the solution to a problem (combination) when the tactical blow flows from the logic of the game.

**41 Bxh6 Rxh6 42 Rxh6+ Qxh6 43 Rh4 Qxh4 44 Qxh4+ Kg7 45 Qf6+ Kh7 46 g4 Nc5
47 Qd8 Rd7 48 Qe8!**

Boris: White has to be careful because sometimes a rook and knight can create a fortress against the queen. Less exact was 48 Qc8 d4! and White still has to find a way to win.

Now Black doesn't have 48...d4 because after 49 cxd4 Black cannot take back as the f7-pawn hangs.

48...Rc7



Exercise: How does White win? (difficulty level 2)

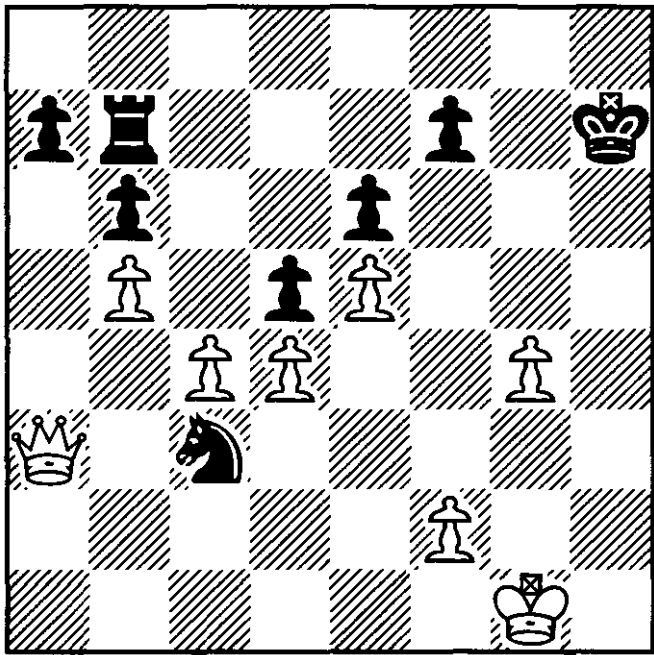
Joel: 49 d4! Ne4 50 Qc6!! seems really strong (Black cannot take because the pawn will queen) 50...Re7 (forced) 51 c4! and White breaks through.

Boris: Correct!

49 d4 Ne4 50 Qc6 Re7 51 c4 Nc3 52 Qd6 Rb7

Boris: In the case of 52...Re8 Black would lose after 53 Qd7 Rf8 54 Qe7 Kg7 55 Qg5+ Kh7 56 Qe3 Ne4 57 f3 and the knight is trapped.

53 Qa3



53...Ne4

No better was 53...Ne2+ 54 Kf1 Nxd4 55 Qd3+, winning the knight.

54 f3 Ng5 55 c5 bxc5 56 dxc5 Kg7 57 c6 1-0

Joel: What leaves a lasting impression on me from this game is the importance of combining attack and defense. The rook maneuvers were excellent examples of this, as they prevented Black’s knight from playing an active role by depriving it of the b3-square and simultaneously prepared a decisive kingside attack. Also, the difference between finding tactical blows when the moves flow from the logic of the game versus when they come out of the blue was a very interesting point.

Boris: I would add that the game demonstrates the relative value of the pieces. For White, it was critical to save the dark-squared bishop, which played a decisive role in the kingside attack. Also, it demonstrates the use of the ranks for the rooks in the middlegame (as opposed to files). Black lost mainly because he overestimated the importance of the weakness of White’s pawns, instead of trying to equalize on moves 15 and 17.

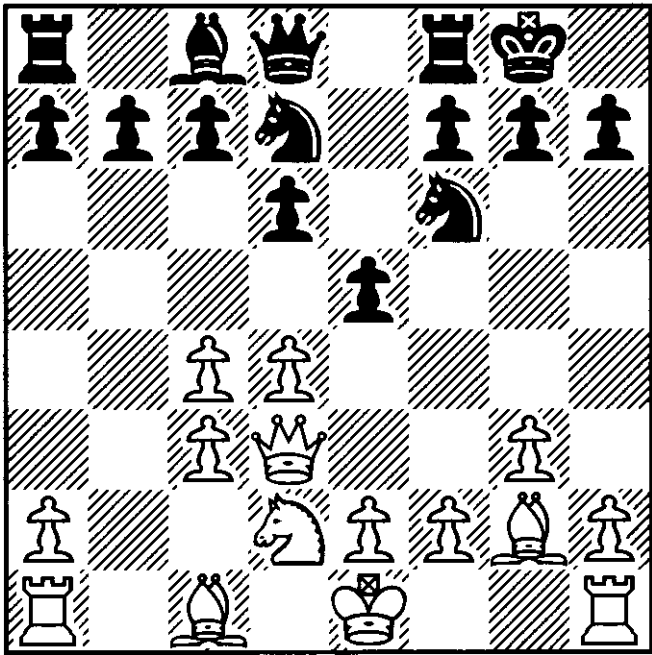
Game Twelve
B.Gulko-Y.Seirawan
US Championship, Salt Lake City 1999
Nimzo-Indian Defense

Boris: The 1999 US Championship had an unusual system that consisted of two round robins. The players that came in first and second place in each round robin decided the championship in matches. It is not a very fair system because the results of the previous stages don't matter. My first match with Seirawan in the semi-final I considered as the final, because the final match with Serper was relatively easy (I won by 2½ to ½). This was the first game of the match consisting of four games.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Bb4 4 g3 O-O 5 Bg2 d6 6 Nf3 Bxc3+ 7 bxc3 Nbd7

Boris: 7...Nc6 is more popular, planning ...Na5 to attack the c4-pawn. 7...Nbd7 is not so active and White can comfortably place his pieces.

8 Qd3 e5 9 Nd2



Joel: This is an interesting knight maneuver. Ivan Sokolov talks about it in his book *Winning Chess Middlegames* in the context of the Hübner Variation. He says that White needs to stay as flexible as possible, keeping the central tension as long as

he can, until the moment when a central blockade will be to his advantage. I find the whole issue of pawn structures in the middlegame of these Nimzo-Indian positions to be some of the hardest to understand in chess.

Boris: In this position, it is critical for White to control the e4-square. If Black managed to push his pawn to e4, he would solve all of his problems. Black tries to do this and I prevent it, ultimately with the move e2-e4 myself.

Joel: The knight maneuver is more about controlling e4 than flexibility?

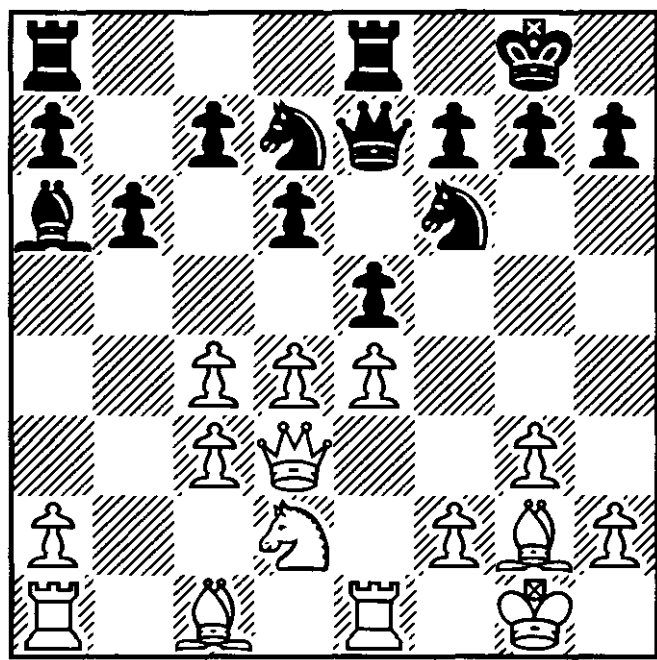
Boris: Both! By keeping control of the e4-square I have flexibility in my pawn structure and my plans.

9...Re8 10 0-0 Qe7 11 e4 b6 12 Re1!

Boris: An important move. I threaten to move my knight from d2 to e3 via f1 with excellent outposts on d5 and f5. With his next move Black tries to prevent this plan.

12...Ba6

Boris: Black didn't have time for 12...a5?! 13 Nf1! Ba6 14 Ne3 with a very comfortable position for White.



Exercise: What did Black have prepared against White's plan of 13 Nf1 - ?
Are Black's tactical opportunities after 13 Nf1 dangerous for White?
What is a good alternative plan to 13 Nf1 - ? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: White has a space advantage and the bishop pair, whereas Black has inflicted

doubled pawns on White which will be the focus of Black's play, at least on the queenside. White's long-term plan is to attack on the kingside and in some cases this will involve sacrificing the c4-pawn for a kingside attack. Fixing the pawn structure with 13 d5 would be horrible because it would give Black the blockading square c5. I think any plan for White must involve f2-f4 so I would play 13 f4. If 13...exf4 14 e5 wins the exchange at the cost of weakening the kingside. I think I would be afraid to play it myself but it seems like the right choice.

Boris: Interesting. I didn't think about 13 f4 at all because my pieces are not prepared to play on the kingside. Tactically, it also doesn't work: 13 f4 exf4 14 e5 (if 14 gxf4 Nh5 and his pieces are much better placed and better developed) 14...fxg3 with advantage to Black, because the white king is completely stripped of all cover and the e-pawn is pinned.

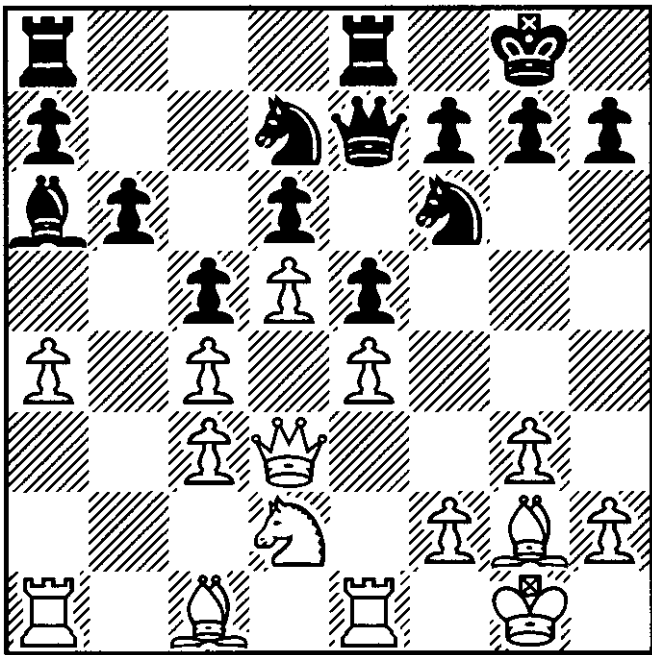
13 a4!

Boris: Black tried to prevent 13 Nf1 with 12...Ba6 because after 13 Nf1!? exd4 14 cxd4 d5 White loses a pawn. Now, however, analyzing with a computer I see that after 15 e5 Bxc4 16 Qc2 White would have great compensation for the pawn.

Joel: In what way?

Boris: I have very well placed pieces, two active bishops, and my knight can jump to e3 or my bishop to g5. White's position is simply excellent. Instead, I played 13 a4 which is typical in this position, trying to gain the initiative on the queenside.

13...c5 14 d5!



Joel: You have decided that the time is right to close the center and begin your kingside attack.

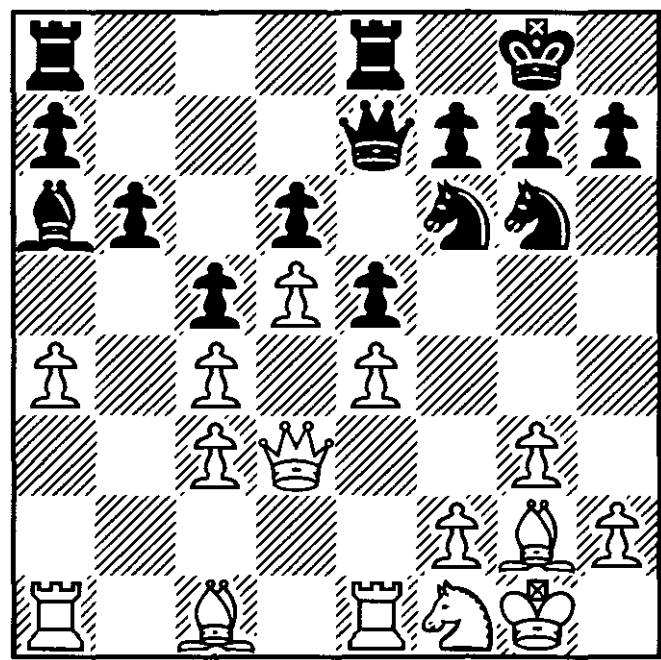
Boris: I don't have any chance of a kingside attack. My chances are on the a-file. If I play 14 a5 immediately, Black would open the position and get sufficient counter-play; e.g. 14 a5 exd4 15 cxd4 cxd4 16 Qxd4 Qe5 17 Bb2 Nc5 18 f4 Qxd4+ 19 Bxd4 Bb7 with equality.

14...Nf8 15 Nf1

Joel: I like 15 a5 here. Can you explain why you didn't play this obvious move?

Boris: Black cannot prevent a4-a5 so I first improve the position of my pieces. If 15 a5?! then 15...Reb8 and I cannot increase the pressure on the queenside because my minor pieces are not available for support. Black would then play ...b6-b5 and it is not White who will have the advantage on the a-file but Black who will have the advantage on the b-file. In general, it is important to improve the position of your pieces and only then to play with pawns.

15...Ng6



Exercise: What is the best way for White to proceed? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: Black is preparing to play against 16 f4. However, 15...Ng6 allows White to play 16 Ne3 with the plan of jumping to f5. So I would play 16 Ne3.

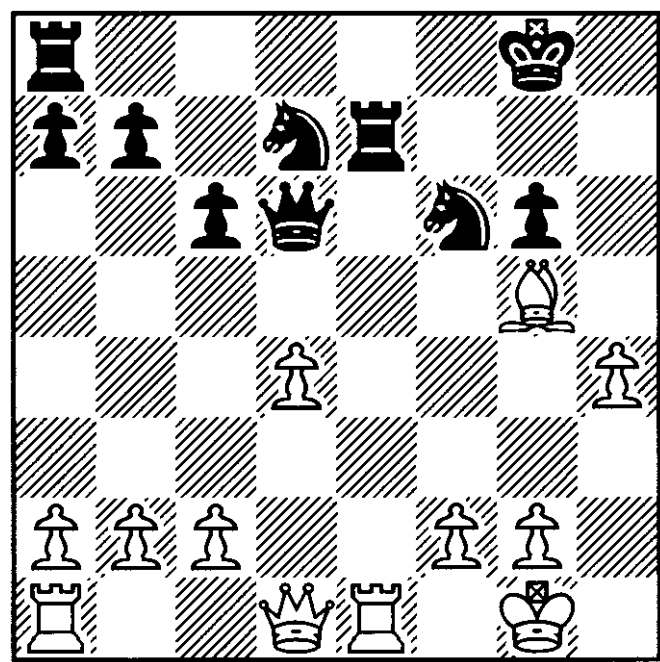
Boris: 16 f4 is a dubious plan here as we discussed, and those reasons still hold.

White’s best plan is to play on the a-file with a4-a5. This plan is not so dangerous unless my minor pieces can be used. Therefore, my next moves are to get rid of pieces that can’t be used and to retain the pieces that I can use.

16 Bh3!

Joel: Very nice! White takes control of the h3-c8 diagonal, preparing Ne3-f5.

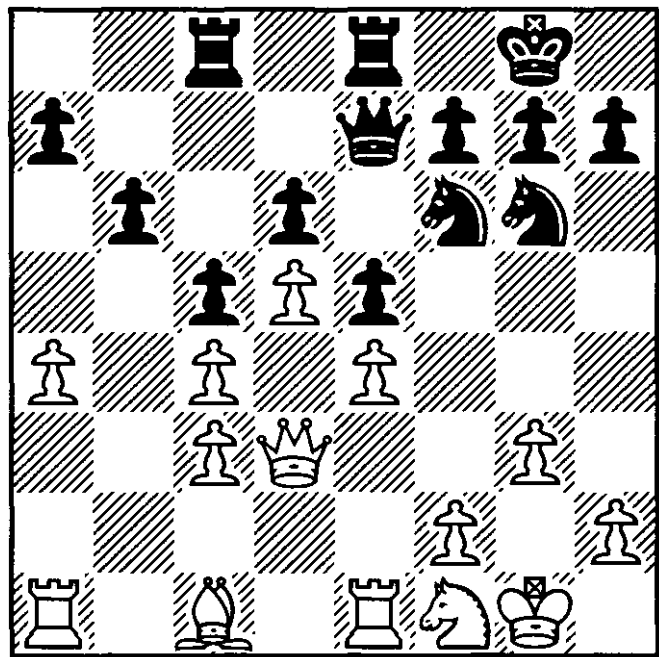
Boris: Not to prepare Ne3-f5 but to exchange bishops. It is generally one of the most important elements of positional chess to determine which pieces need to be exchanged and which need to stay on the board. In Tal’s book about his world championship match with Botvinnik (1960), he tells a story about discussing the following position from the ninth game.



Tal tried to prove his estimation of the position with wild variations when suddenly Botvinnik said, “First I thought the position was more pleasant for White but later I found the correct plan, it is necessary to exchange rooks and keep queens on the board.” According to Tal, after some thought, he realized that Botvinnik’s estimation was completely correct. This shows not only the importance of figuring out which pieces to keep and which pieces to exchange, but also that there are very different ways of thinking about chess positions.

Returning my game, 16 f4? would be a big mistake due to 16...exf4 17 gxf4 Nh5 18 Qf3 Qh4 with advantage to Black. The natural transfer of the knight to f5, which you offered, would also not be good for White, because of 16 Ne3 Bc8 17 Nf5 Bxf5 18 exf5 e4 19 Qc2 Ne5 and Black is fine.

16...Bc8 17 Bxc8 Raxc8



Exercise: How does White have to execute his plan here? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: This move allows 18 a5 and, if Black does not take, then 19 axb6 gives Black a backward pawn on b6.

Boris: For White it is of paramount importance to get rid of the dark-squared bishop because it will not be of any use in the play on the a-file.

18 Bg5!?

Boris: Here 18 Ne3?! would be wrong because I would retain a bishop I don't need for my plan.

18...h6 19 Bxf6

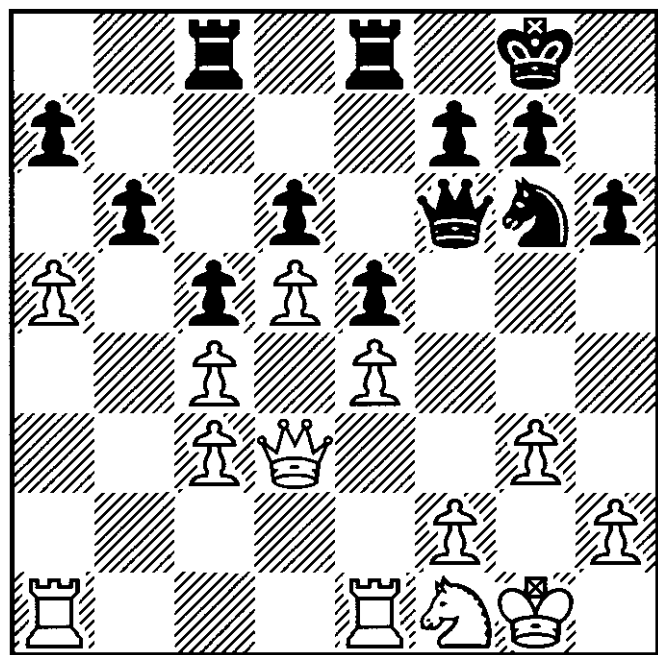
Joel: Knights are better than bishops in this closed position. Here it may even be more specific than that: the knight of f6 was better than the bishop on c1. Black's other knight does not have many good squares either.

Boris: Correct.

19...Qxf6 20 a5

Joel: Now White has a definite advantage on the queenside, in my opinion.

Boris: Yes.



20...Nf8

Joel: Black plans 21...Nd7 where it will protect b6. To get counterplay, Black will engineer the ...f7-f5 break. I would go ahead with 21 Rfb1.

Boris: You're right about the knight, but after 20...Nf8 I can just take the a-file so I don't need to play 21 Rfb1. The plan of ...f7-f5 would not be realistic here because he doesn't have the time or resources to prepare it. I am breaking through on the queenside and he has to use all of his energy for defense. Being more active would have given him better chances to escape: 20...bxa5!? 21 Rxa5 Rb8 22 Rxa7 Rb2 23 Re2 Reb8 24 Rxb2 Rxb2 25 Qe3 and this position is better for Black than the one in the game.

21 axb6 axb6 22 Ra6

Boris: 22 Ra7 Ra8 23 Rea1 Rxa7 24 Rxa7 was approximately equally good.

22...Ra8 23 Rea1 Rxa6 24 Rxa6 Rb8

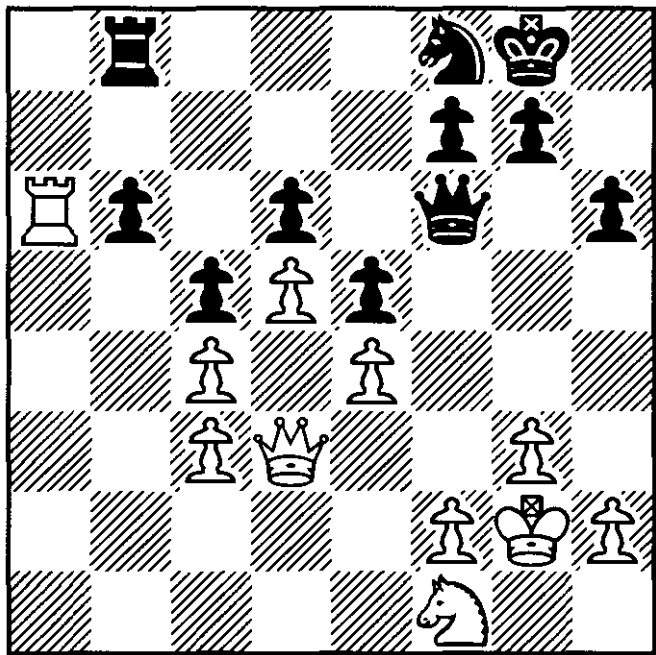
Joel: Black seems horribly passive now.

Boris: Yes.

25 Kg2!

Joel: Slowly improving your position. There is no need to hurry.

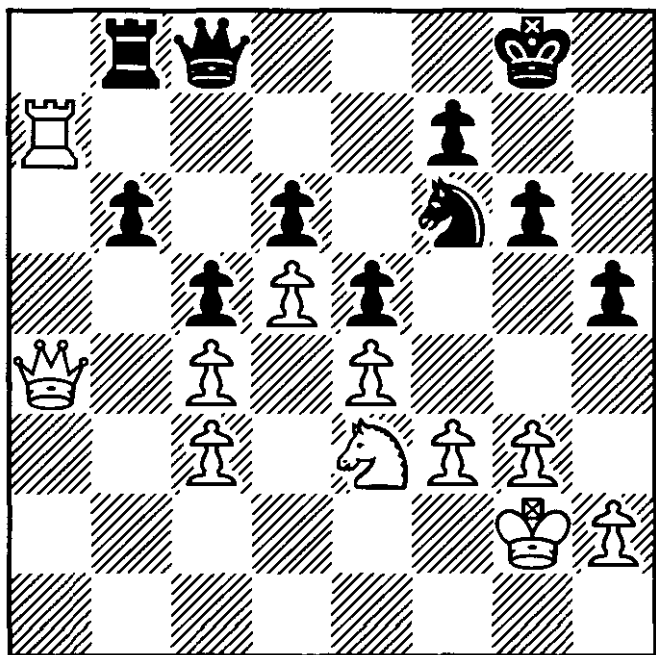
Boris: It is really more concrete than that. White has to be careful not to give Black counterplay after 25 Ne3? Qf3.



25...Qe7 26 Qb1

Boris: Not allowing him to kick my annoying rook out of its dominating position.

26...Qb7 27 Qb5 Nd7 28 Qa4 Nf6 29 Ra7 Qc8 30 f3 g6 31 Ne3 h5



Exercise: How does White have to proceed? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: With his last move, Black keeps the white knight out of the kingside as the g4- and f5-squares are protected. It is difficult to see a way forward. It seems Black will

be able to defend only one weakness. White needs to come up with a way to create a second weakness that he can take advantage of. Well, until then I would pile up on b6 with 32 Nc2.

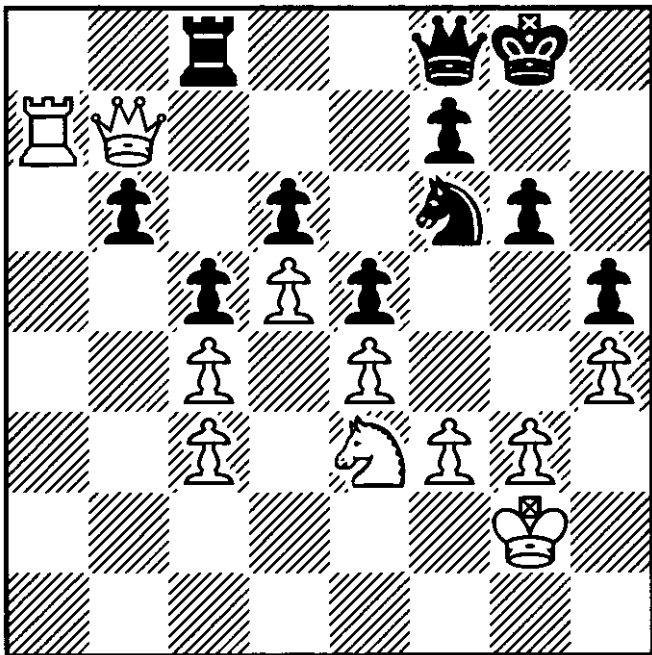
Boris: White is clearly better because I have the only open file. I need to find a way to penetrate into his camp and tie down his pieces even more.

32 Qc6!

Joel: Once I saw this move it made perfect sense: if he exchanges you will get a passed pawn.

Boris: A *protected* passed pawn because White's knight will jump to d5 and will have to be exchanged. The knight has to stay on e3 because it prevents Black's counterplay on the kingside. In the case of 32 Nc2, which you offered, there would follow 32...h4 and White doesn't have 33 g4? because of 33...Nxe4!.

32...Qd8 33 h4 Rc8 34 Qb7 Qf8



35 Nd1!?

Joel: Again not hurrying. Of course, I would have just taken the pawn.

Boris: You're right, White could just take the pawn: 35 Qxb6!? Rb8 36 Qc7 Rb2+ (36...Rc8 37 Qb7 Rb8 38 Qc6) 37 Kf1 Rb1+ 38 Kf2 Rb2+ 39 Ke1 and White has a big advantage. This position would be similar to the game.

Joel: This makes me more nervous than the game though. His rook is active and he can go after your kingside with 39...Rb1+ 40 Kd2 Rg1.

Boris: But then 41 Rb7 wins on the spot. When only one rook has activity, and it is not supported by other pieces, it cannot be dangerous.

35...Rb8 36 Qc6 Rc8 37 Qb7 Rb8 38 Qc6 Rc8

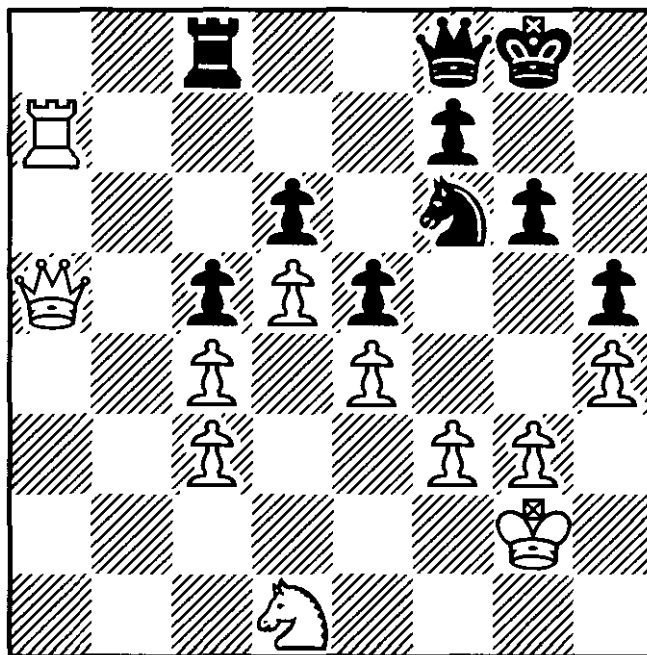
Joel: These moves look like there were made just before the time control.

Boris: Yes, I was just trying to find the best way, perhaps with my hand instead of my head.

39 Qxb6 Rb8 40 Qc7

Joel: And now the purpose of 35 Nd1 becomes clear: to control the b2-square.

40...Rc8 41 Qb7 Rb8 42 Qc7 Rc8 43 Qa5



Exercise: Black is under pressure.

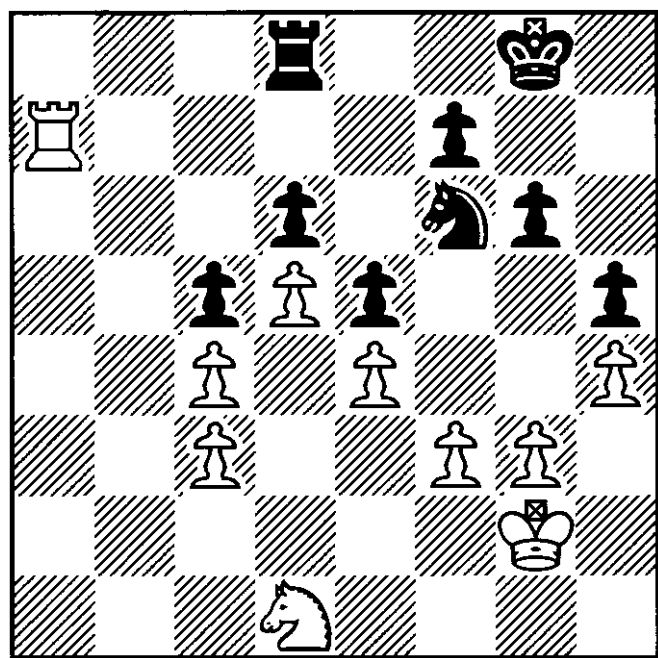
Should he offer to exchange queens? (difficulty level 4)

43...Qd8?!

Boris: He makes my task much easier. Anyone under pressure for a long time is prone to mistakes. All of those moves I previously made were the psychological roots of his mistake. Capablanca once told Botvinnik that: *when you have a better position, and your opponent is passive, don't rush; keep the position and your opponent will self-destruct*. This happened in the game. If White, in the previous stage of the game, increased his advantage by getting rid of unnecessary pieces,

Black here makes his position more difficult by offering an unfavorable exchange of queens. 43...Rb8 44 Nf2 was a better option for Black. White is better but it is not so easy to break through.

44 Qxd8+ Rxd8



Exercise: Which plan increases White’s advantage? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Now you have transposed into an ending with one extra pawn and it is doubled. It seems this would be quite difficult to win.

Boris: Now White has a big advantage. Without queens it is easier to improve my position without worrying about counterplay. 45 Kf2 is the first stage of the winning plan. The king will go to c2 and Black will not be able to use the b-file. The second stage will consist of improving the position of my knight.

45 Kf2! Kf8 46 Ke2 Rd7

Boris: Black offers to exchange rooks.

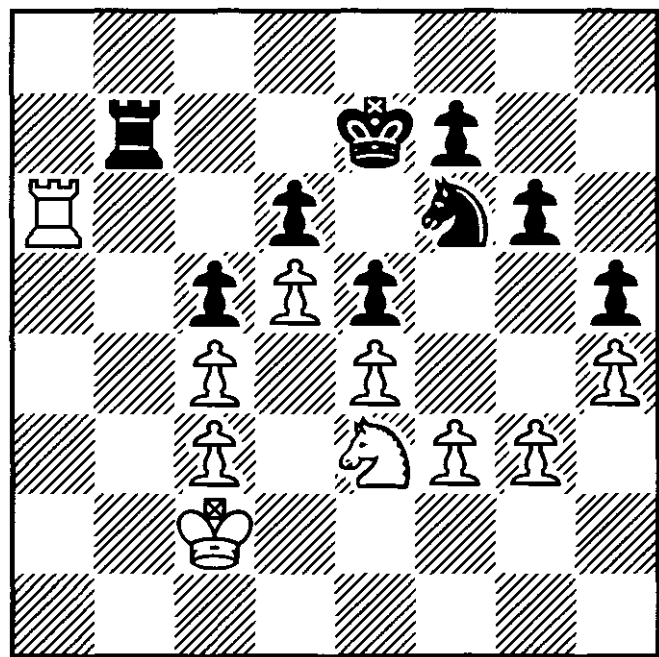
47 Ra6

Boris: Of course a rook exchange would not be equal because White’s rook is much better than Black’s rook.

47...Ke7 48 Kd2 Rb7 49 Kc2 Ne8

If 49...Nd7!? 50 Ne3 Nb6, White will begin action on the kingside with 51 g4.

50 Ne3 Nf6

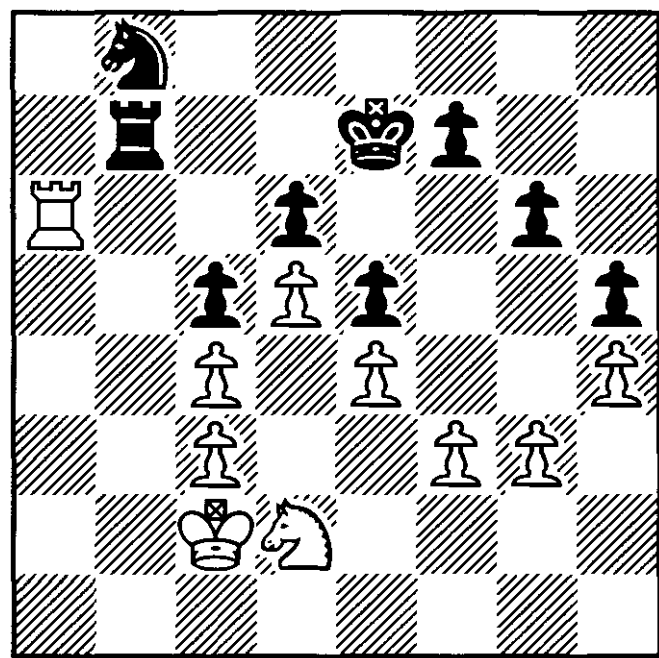


Exercise: Which maneuver will increase White's advantage? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: With Black's last move, he controls the kingside and prevents f3-f4 because the e4-pawn would fall. Still, I can't see the way through for White.

Boris: f3-f4 is not dangerous, but g3-g4 is dangerous and 50...Nf6 prevents it. With 51 Nf1, White starts the second stage of his winning plan by bringing the knight to b5 via d2-b1-a3, or to a5 via d2-b3.

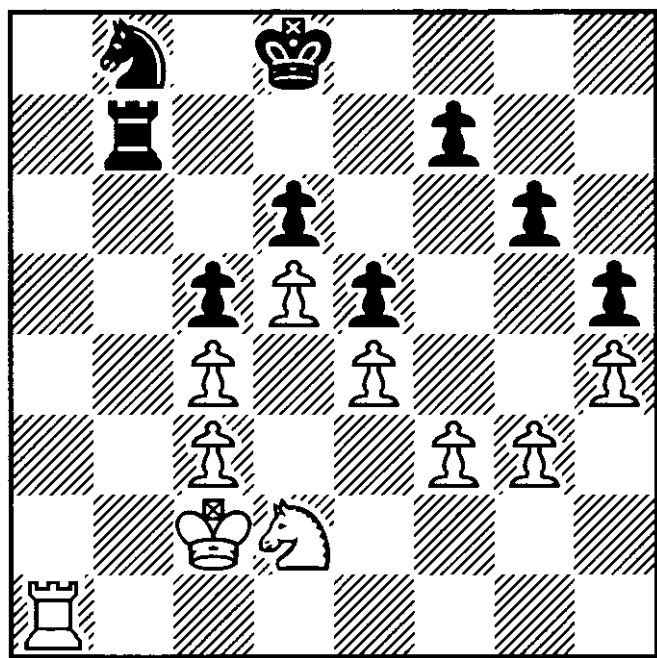
51 Nf1! Nd7 52 Nd2 Nb8



53 Ra1!

Boris: 53 Ra8 would be a mistake due to 53...Nd7 and White does not have 54 Nb3? because of 54...Nb6.

53...Kd8



Exercise: What is the third stage of White’s winning plan? (difficulty level 3)

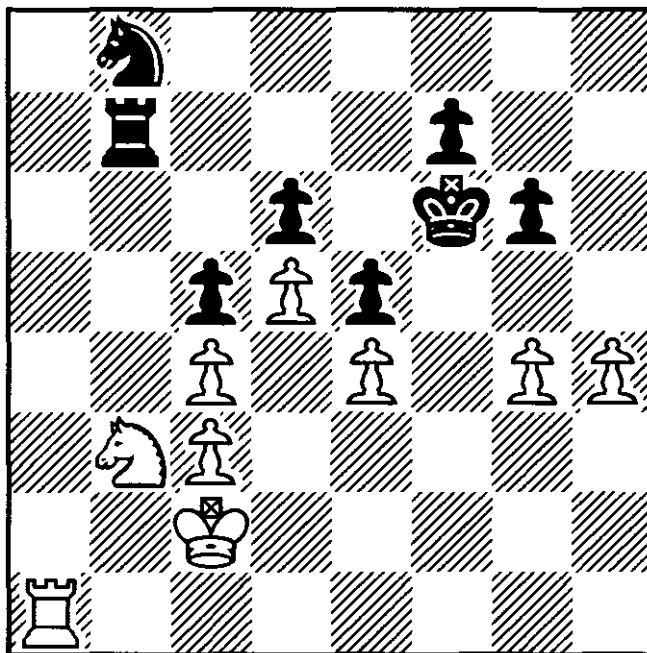
Joel: Black has expelled White. Is it possible to switch over to the kingside? I am thinking about playing 54 f4 now that the knight has vacated the kingside. This would finally generate a second weakness.

Boris: You’re right, it is time to play on the kingside, but I think 54 g4 is preferable to 54 f4. After Black defends the queenside by bringing his king, rook, and knight there, it becomes possible for White to open a second front on the kingside with 54 g4. This is the third stage of the winning plan.

54 g4!

Boris: With his last moves, Black has defended against the white knight’s invasion of the queenside; for example, 54 Nb3 Kc7 55 Ra8 Rb6 with idea of 56 Na5? Ra6 and the position is equal. If 54 f4, as you suggest, then Black can play 54...Nd7 and the black knight has potential to attack e4.

54...hxg4 55 fxg4 Ke7 56 Nb3 Kf6



Exercise: Now that Black's king has to return to the kingside, how should White proceed? (difficulty level 3)

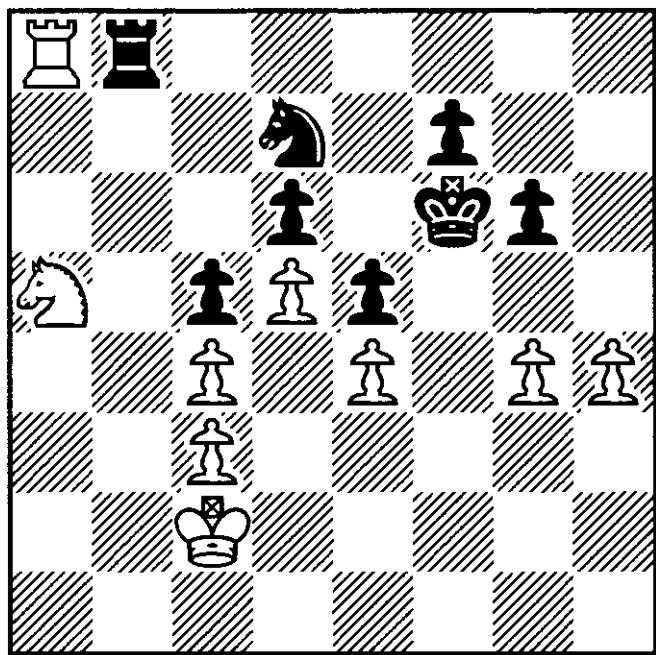
Joel: I would play the mysterious 57 Rg1 here, setting up h4-h5.

Boris: Now that Black has returned with his king to protect the kingside, I go back to the under-protected queenside. The desperate 56...f5 would be bad because after 57 exf5 gxf5 58 g5 White is winning.

57 Ra8!

Boris: After your recommendation 57 Rg1, then h4-h5 is not a threat because Black has ...Kg5 and White's pawns are under attack and not dangerous.

57...Nd7 58 Na5 Rb8



Exercise: White to play and win. (difficulty level 3)

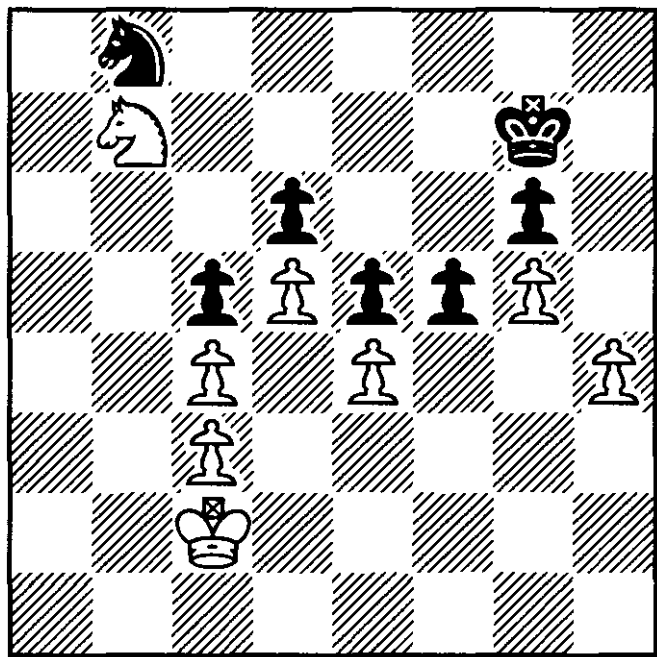
Joel: But doesn't 58...Rb8 allow 59 Rxb8 Nxb8 60 Nb7 Ke7 61 h5, when White has an outside passed pawn and Black will have a hard time trying to prevent it from promoting without losing the d6-pawn and the game.

Boris: But in your variation Black has time to return the knight to f6 holding up White's pawn. Your idea was right but the execution was inaccurate.

59 g5+!

Joel: Nice intermezzo! White forces the black king away from the protection of d6.

59...Kg7 60 Rxb8 Nxb8 61 Nb7 f5

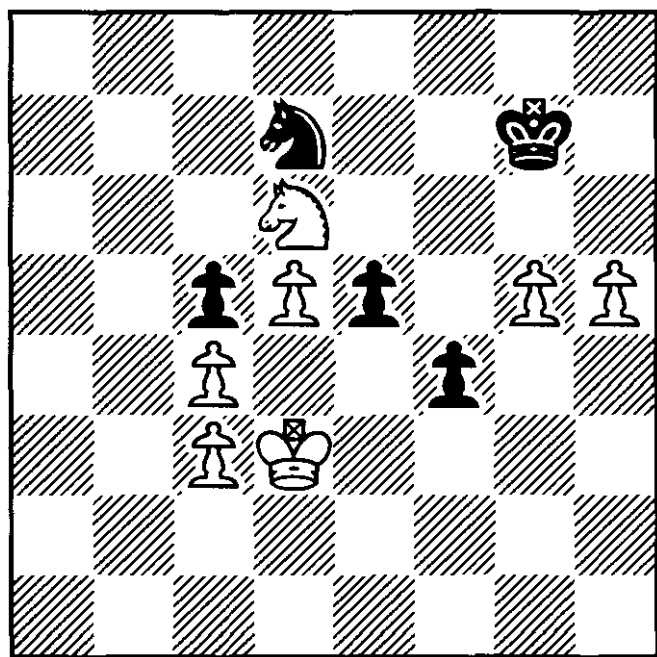


Exercise: What is the precise way to win here? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I would play 62 exf5 followed by 63 Nxd6, when Black's e- and f-pawns can be blockaded.

Boris: Your variation allows 63...Kg6 when White's pawns are blockaded. The precise way to finish the game is to deprive the king of the g6-square.

62 exf5 gxf5 63 h5! f4 64 Nxd6 Nd7 65 Kd3 1-0



Lessons with a Grandmaster

Boris: I think the most important lesson from this game is that in chess there are no equal exchanges. Each exchange improves or worsens your position. The game also demonstrates the importance of controlling the only open file. Also, in the endgame, when your opponent is passive and has to defend on one side of the board, it is important to switch the attack to the other side of the board.

Joel: Why is that?

Boris: Because with passive pieces he cannot be in two places at the same time, whereas the side with the active pieces *can* be in two places at once.

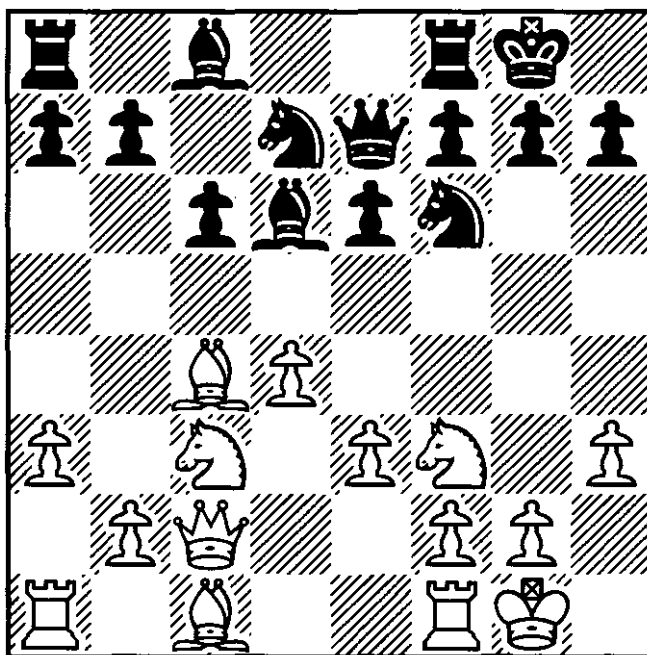
Game Thirteen
B.Gulko-R.Hübner
 Biel 1987
Semi-Slav Defense

Boris: This was the penultimate round of the Biel tournament. For me it was very important to win to keep my position as leader. After I won this game, I went into the last round with a one point lead, needing only a draw to take clear first, which I did. The main topic of this game is prophylaxis, which is how White was able to win.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 c6 3 Nc3 d5 4 e3 e6 5 Nf3 Nbd7 6 Bd3 Bb4 7 0-0 0-0 8 Qc2 Qe7 9 a3 dxc4 10 Bxc4

Boris: Interesting was 10 Bxh7+!? Nxh7 11 axb4 Qxb4 12 e4 with good compensation for the pawn.

10...Bd6 11 h3!?



Boris: This was the start of a series of prophylactic moves. If I had played 11 e4 Black would have answered 11...e5 with a good game.

Joel: But Black plays 11...e5 anyway. What is the difference between having your

pawn on e3 or e4 in this position?

Boris: This is a very interesting and important question, but I think it will be easier to explain in a few moves.

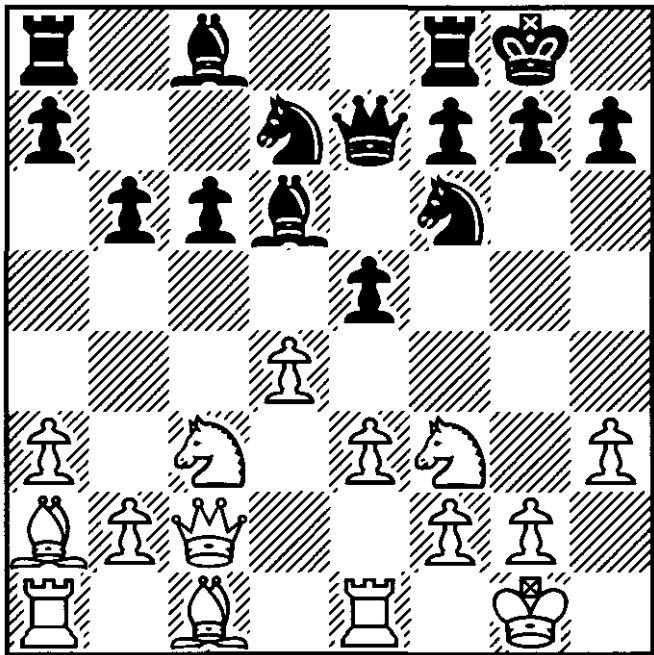
11...e5 12 Ba2

Boris: The second prophylactic move. The bishop retreats to a square where it cannot be attacked by a knight on b6.

12...b6

Boris: Now it is not so easy for Black to make a move. If 12...exd4 13 exd4 and White is ready to play Re1, Bg5, and Ne5 with a very strong position. And 12...e4 13 Ng5 is bad for Black. Here, if my pawn were on h2 instead of h3, Black would have ...Bxh2+, ...Ng4+ and ...Qxg5; and if my bishop were on c4, he would have ...Nb6 and ...Bf5, defending the pawn. So with 11 h3 and 12 Ba2, I prevented 12...e4. This is why I preferred prophylactic moves over 11 e4.

13 Re1



Exercise: Where does Black have to develop his light-squared bishop:
on b7 or a6? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: We have reached a position with a common structure for the quiet lines of the Slav/Semi-Slav Defense in which Black has engineered the move ...e6-e5. This is a double-edged move and favors the side that has a lead in development (time

advantage). In this case, it seems both sides are developed equally, although White now has put his rook on the e-file anticipating ...e4xd4. Although this would gain time on the queen, and perhaps give White the initiative, Black would inflict White with an IQP, which conveys some long-term advantages. However, if Black plays 13...exd4 14 exd4 Qd8 White will play 15 Bg5 followed by Rad1 and Bb1 and Black will have to be careful not to get mated on the kingside. I don't think Black wants to play this way. I think Black should develop with ...Bb7 or ...Re8. In this situation I would probably play 13...Bb7, just completing my development.

13...Ba6!

Boris: You tend to make general observations when in this position you needed to calculate concrete variations and find the difference.

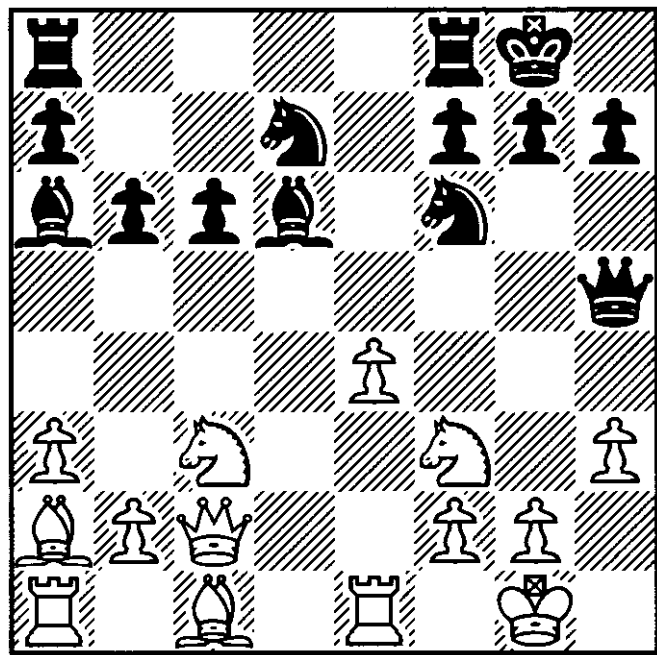
Joel: Is that something in general you notice with players my level?

Boris: Chess players need to make both positional considerations and calculate variations, but in the right proportion. Your analysis very often is too general and you don't try to find specific finesses in the position based on calculations. You didn't solve this problem because you tried to solve it with generalities not concrete calculations which, by the way, is the most important part of chess. Generally after 12...b6 the move you offered is natural, but in a critical variation White can catch Black's queen in the center of the board.

Joel: How do you go about improving this tendency of mine?

Boris: Try to find concrete solutions to problems. Put the position on the board and calculate variations. You had to find 13...Bb7? 14 e4 exd4 15 Nxd4 Qe5? (this double attack is an important resource for Black in this position, otherwise he would have a passive position) 16 f4! Qxd4+ (in the case of 16...Qh5 17 e5 Bc5 18 Be3 Black would be much worse) 17 Be3 and the queen is trapped. The move Hübner played prevents this idea, as with the bishop on a6 he would now have 17...Qd3.

14 e4 exd4 15 Nxd4 Qe5 16 Nf3 Qh5



Exercise: How should White proceed? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I would play 17 Bg5, threatening to take the knight, which would force Black to take back with the g-pawn otherwise e4-e5 would win a piece. This is also a developing move and prepares Rad1 followed (perhaps) by Bb1 threatening mate in some instances.

Boris: My impression is that Black is very close to obtaining a very nice game, but White has a clever way of transposing from an unclear middlegame to a better endgame. The move you suggested, 17 Bg5, doesn't offer White any advantage after 17...Ne5.

17 Qd1!

Boris: 17 Be3 doesn't promise anything either after 17...Ne5 18 Nxe5 Bxe5.

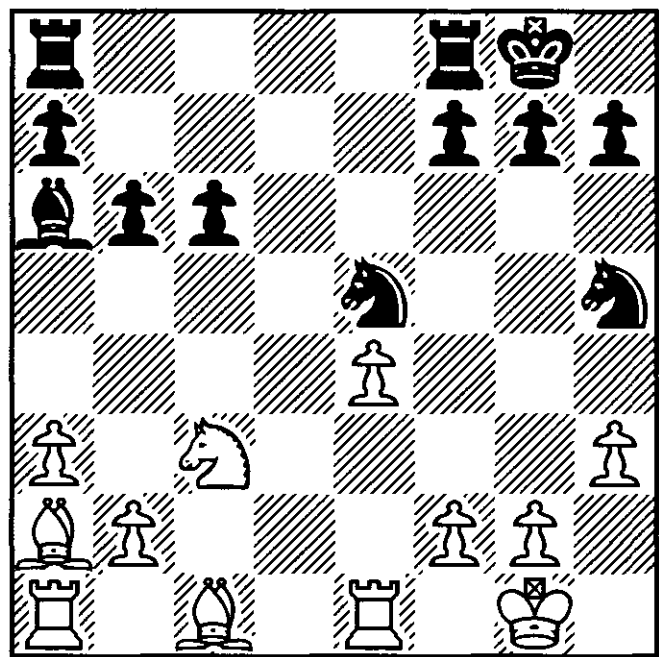
17...Be5

Boris: The only move. Otherwise White would play e4-e5.

18 Nxe5 Nxe5

Black has to go into an endgame because 18...Qxe5 19 f4 is much better for White.

19 Qxh5 Nxh5



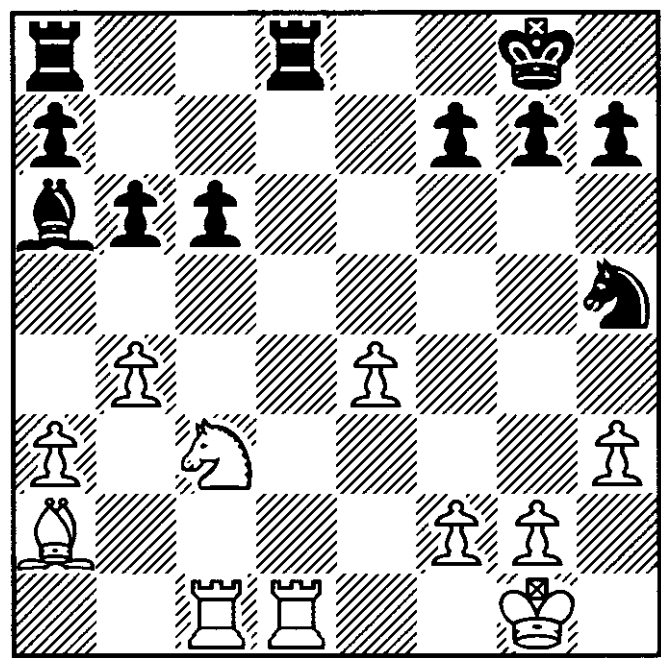
Exercise: Should White start with 20 b4 or 20 Rd1 - ? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: White has obtained the bishop pair which can be an advantage, especially in the endgame. His play should be consistent with maximizing this advantage, which includes opening up the position to improve their scope. In the first place, Black is threatening 20...Nd3 immediately eliminating one of the bishops. In order to retain the bishop pair and control the only open file, White should play 20 Rd1 followed Be3.

Boris: Your suggestion is correct. Black has two ideas: 20...Bc4, exchanging the light-squared bishops, or 20...Nd3. White has to determine what is more unpleasant. White's next is a prophylactic move so that 20...Nd3 comes without tempo. If 20 b4 then Black can play 20...Bc4 exchanging bishops and equalizing. 20 Rd1 is a Karpov-style move (i.e. moving a piece before it is attacked).

20 Rd1! Nd3 21 b4 Rad8

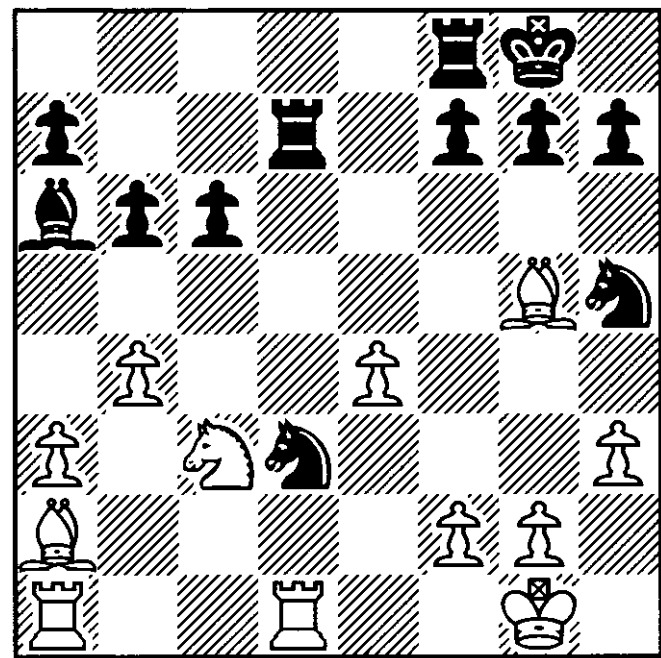
Black cannot comfortably get rid of the bishop pair because of 21...Nxc1?! 22 Raxc1 Rfd8 and then:



Exercise: How should White play to maintain the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

Boris: White cannot waste time. The immediate 23 b5! is correct, when after 23...Bxb5 (if 23...cxb5 24 Nd5 and White is winning) 24 Nxb5 cxb5 25 Rxd8+ Rxd8 26 Rc7 White has a big advantage.

22 Bg5 Rd7

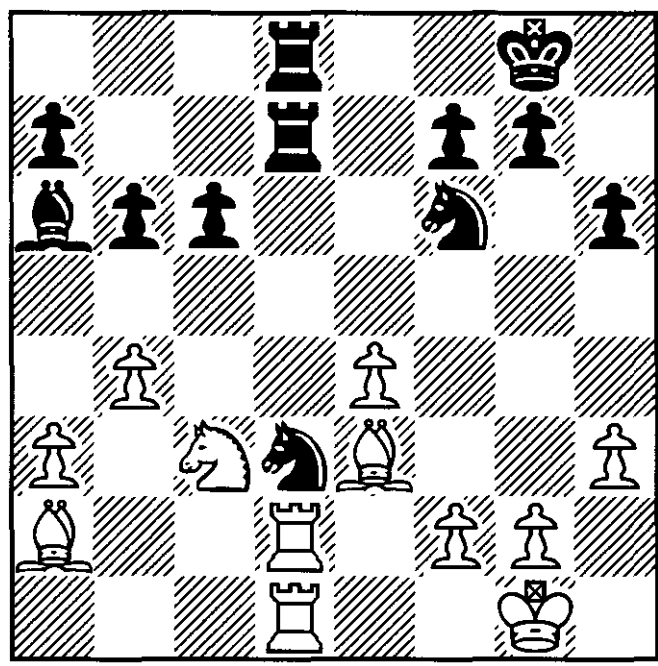


Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 2)

23 Rd2!

Boris: Continuing the theme of prophylaxis, White prevents Black from dominating the d-file. The other way, 23 a4!? h6 24 Be3 Rfd8 25 b5 Bb7 26 bxc6 Bxc6, leads only to equality after 27 Bd5 Nb4 or 27 Nd5!? Nb4.

23...h6 24 Be3 Rfd8 25 Rad1 Nf6



Exercise: How should White continue? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: In this position I would like to get rid of Black’s knight, but I am also thinking about tactics because there is a potential pin on the d-file. Therefore, I am looking at moves like 26 b5 or 26 f4 (with the threat of e4-e5). 26 f4 seems weakening, but 26 b5 is interesting because after 26...cxb5 the bishop is blocked and White can play 27 Nd5. If 27...Nxe4 then 28 Rxd3, and if 27...Nxd5 then 28 Bxd5 wins. If Black retreats the knight, for example, 27...Ne5 then 28 f4 looks strong, but 28...Nxe4 hits the rook and the knight on d5 is hanging so I don’t think this works. Therefore, White should play 26 f4 first, taking the e5-square away from Black.

26 Bb3!

Boris: Your suggested pawn sacrifice 26 b5 is not so good because after 26...Bxb5 I don’t see any benefit. Your other suggestion of 26 f4 is met by 26...Nb2! 27 Rxd7 Rxd7 28 Rxd7 Nxd7 and Black will reach an equal position because inevitably he will play 29...Bc4 exchanging bishops. The same applies to the straightforward 26 Bb1, as after 26...Nb2! 27 Rxd7 Rxd7 28 Rxd7 Nxd7 Black can exchange bishops

with 29...Bd3. In this position, White has to prevent by prophylaxis the trick of 26...Nb2 by defending the rook on d1.

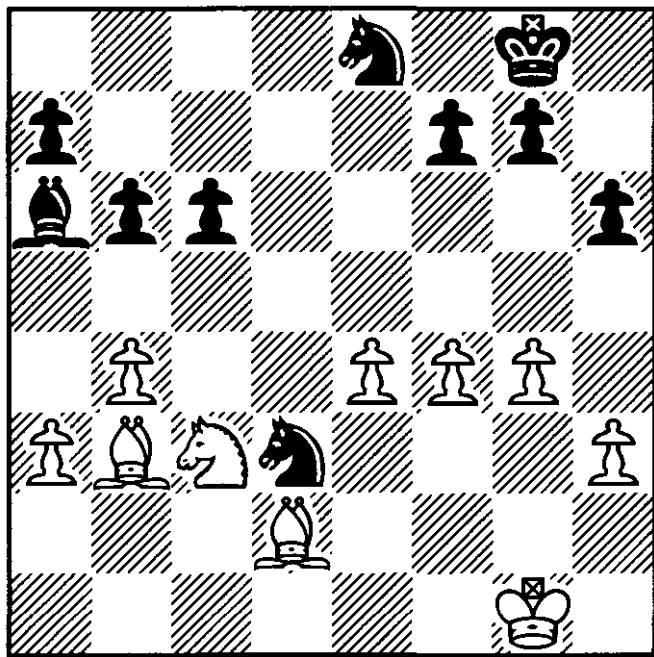
26...Ne5 27 f4 Rxd2 28 Rxd2 Rxd2 29 Bxd2 Nd3!

Boris: In the case of 29...Nc4 30 Bc1 White would be clearly better. He has the bishop pair and more space.

30 g4!

Boris: Prophylaxis against the unpleasant threat of 30...Nh5.

30...Ne8!

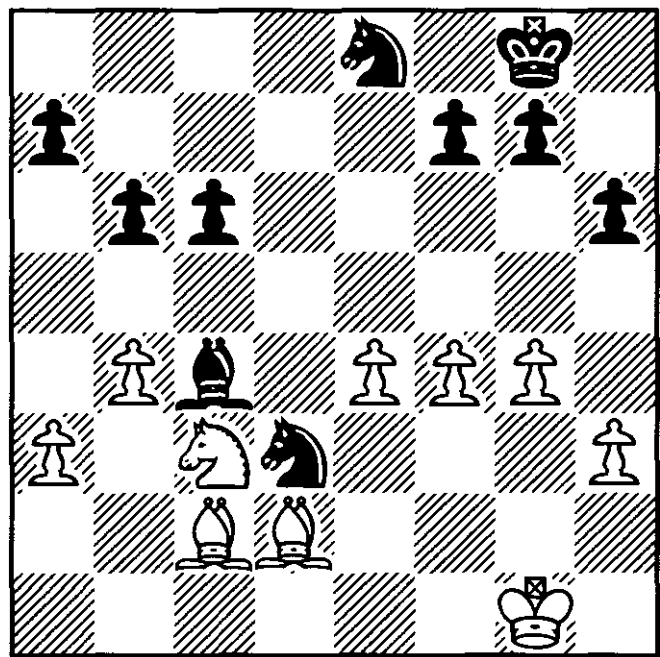


Exercise: What does White have to play?
Is it time to attack the c6-pawn? (difficulty level 4)

31 Bc2!

Boris: It looks like White might be able to create big problems for Black with the move 31 Ba4?!, but in this case Black has 31...Nd6! 32 Bxc6 Nc4 33 Nb1 Nxd2 34 Nxd2 Nxf4 with equality. Now, after 31 Bc2, White threatens 32 b5, so this forces Black to play 31...Bc4.

31...Bc4



Exercise: What should White do? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White has managed to keep his bishop pair. White has a kingside pawn majority and Black a queenside majority. The bishop pair is an advantage in this situation because there are pawns on both sides of the board. However, Black has a very strong and centrally posted knight that prevents White's king from joining the fight, and 32 Bxd3 would lead to an opposite-colored bishop ending, which is likely drawn. Black is not necessarily threatening anything right now and I imagine he would like to bring his e8-knight back into the game with ...Nf6 or ...Nd6. Therefore, 32 e5 looks strong, taking these squares away from the knight and making the e4-square available for White's knight. This would also prepare Ne4-f2 trying to exchange off the d3-knight. So I think 32 e5 is best.

Boris: You see you try to solve these problems through generalities when concrete calculations are called for. I don't think that 32 e5 is good because after 32...Nc7 Black would threaten ...Ne6 (with active play) or ...c6-c5 (improving his pawn structure).

32 Ba4!

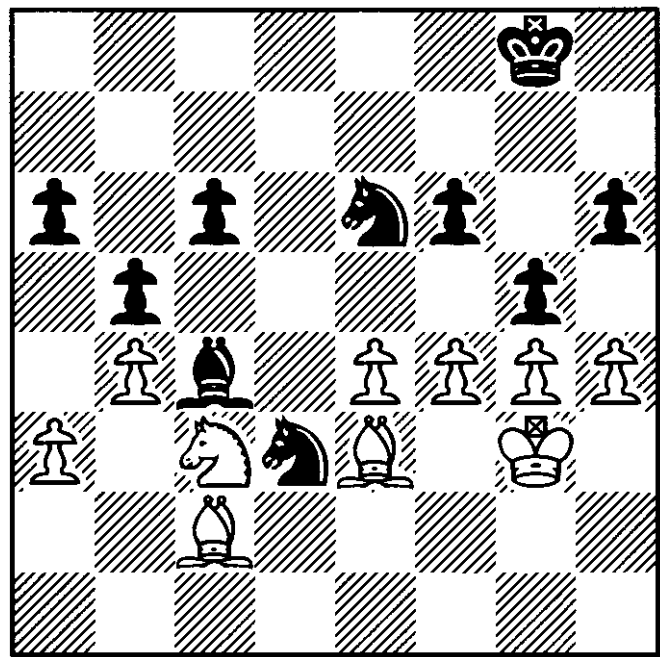
Boris: Now that Black's bishop prevents the knight on e8 from reaching the c4-square, this is very strong.

32...b5

Boris: A big achievement for White. Black's pawn structure on the queenside now

has a lot of weaknesses and his pawn majority is not significant.

33 Bc2 Nc7 34 Be3 a6 35 Kh2 f6 36 Kg3 Ne6 37 h4 g5?!



Exercise: How can White cement his advantage? (difficulty level 3)

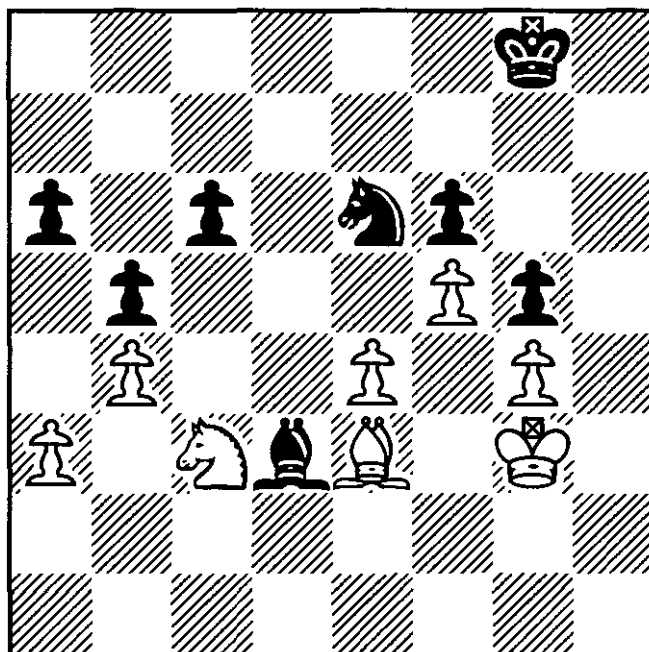
Joel: Black is currently threatening to win the f4-pawn, which means that White must think about either pushing it, when the e5-square would become a great outpost for the knight, or taking the d3-knight, which would lead to an opposite-colored bishop ending. It is possible that the additional factor of king position is now important and that White might be able to activate the king if he exchanges on d3. The problem is that he will not be able to use the e4-square because of Black's bishop. Hold on, hold on. I am thinking about this all wrong. White has a pawn majority on the kingside. He needs to push his pawns and create a passed pawn that will tie Black down, when White's pieces can attack Black's queenside. Therefore, he must take on d3 because the d3-knight controls f4 and e5.

Boris: Very good! Bronstein once wrote that the advantage of the two bishops is that it is easy at the appropriate moment to exchange one of them.

38 Bxd3! Bxd3?!

Boris: 38...gxh4+!? was preferable, but White would maintain the advantage nevertheless after 39 Kxh4 Bxd3 40 f5 Ng5 41 Bxg5 hxg5+ 42 Kh5 Kg7 43 e5!.

39 hxg5 hxg5 40 f5!



40...Nc7

Boris: In the case of 40...Nf8 White would immediately play 41 e5. It is difficult to believe that Black is losing, given the opposite-colored bishops and equal material, but in fact Black is lost because of the backward c-pawn. In this position White is practically up a pawn.

41 Bb6 Ne8

Boris: 41...Na8 42 Bd8 would be easily winning because the knight cannot leave the corner.

42 Bc5 Kf7 43 Kf3 Nc7 44 Bd6 Na8

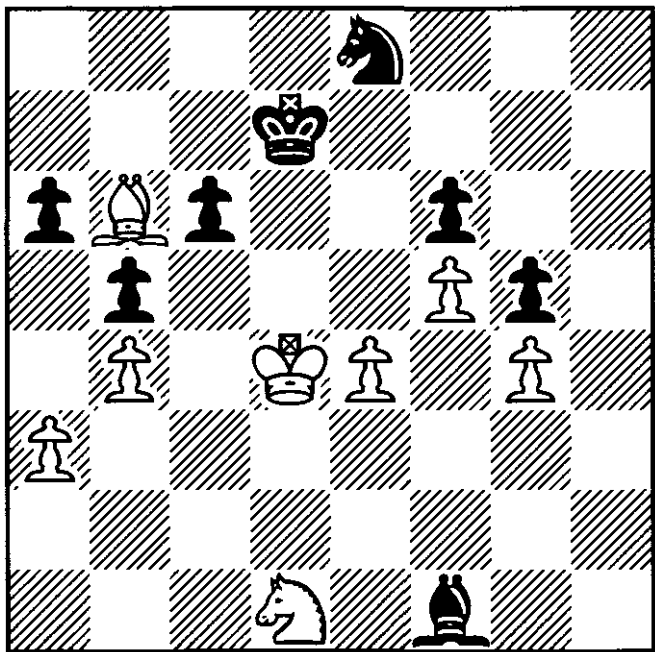
Boris: I was checking to see whether Hübner would play 44...Ne8, when 45 Bg3 Ke7 46 e5 would be easily winning. Remember, when your opponent doesn't have active opportunities he will often self-destruct on his own, so there is no need to rush.

45 Bc5 Nc7 46 Ke3 Bf1 47 Nd1!

Boris: The g4-pawn needs support.

47...Ke8 48 Kd4 Kd7 49 Bb6 Ne8

Boris: If 49...Kd6, White would win by 50 Bxc7+ Kxc7 51 e5.



Exercise: Which move is more appropriate: 50 e5 or 50 Ne3 - ? (difficulty level 3)

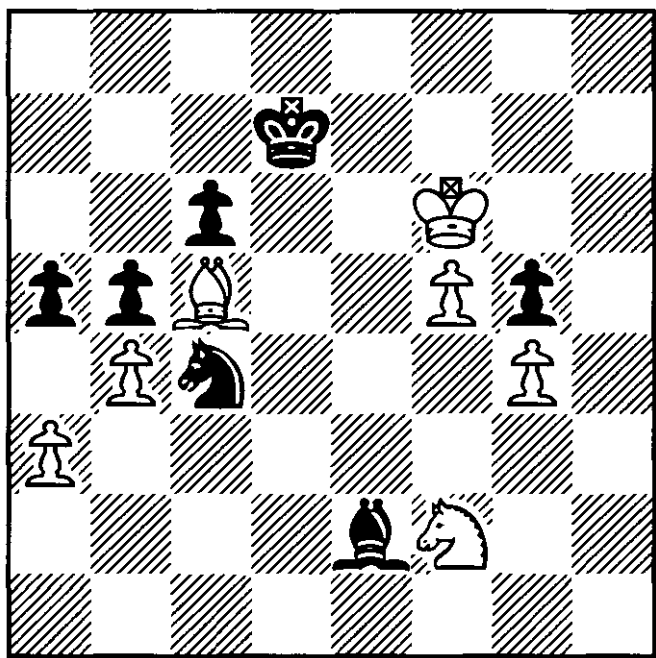
Joel: White is going to use the dark squares. He will play his knight to e3 to protect g4. I would like to take the d6-square away from the knight with 50 e5 because it will have a hard time returning to the game, and if 50...fxe5, White's king is centrally posted and White has a passed f-pawn.

Boris: Very good. But again your consideration is not concrete enough. 50 Ne3 looks very natural because it attacks the bishop, but the knight can move either to e3 or f2 so I prefer to play 50 e5 first and then decide where the knight belongs. This retains maximum flexibility. It is essential as well to keep the e3-square available for the bishop. In the case of 50 Ne3 Be2 51 e5 fxe5+ 52 Kxe5 Ke7 Black builds a defense.

50 e5! fxe5+

Boris: Black would lose after 50...Be2 51 Nf2! (51 Ne3? would be bad, as then 51...fxe5+ 52 Kxe5 Ke7 transposes to the previous note) 51...Bf3 (now after 51...fxe5+ 52 Kxe5 Ke7 White wins with 53 Be3! – this is the reason 50 e5 was correct: as previously mentioned, White had to reserve the e3-square for the bishop) 52 Bc5 Be2 53 Ne4! Bxg4 (White would win as well after 53...fxe5+ 54 Kxe5 Bxg4 55 f6 Bh5 56 Nxg5) 54 exf6 Bh5 55 Ke5 Nc7 (vacating the e8-square for the king, otherwise Nxg5 is coming and the f6-pawn is unstoppable) 56 Nxg5 Ke8 57 Ne6! Kd7 58 Nxc7 Kxc7 59 Ke6 and White is winning.

51 Kxe5 Be2 52 Nf2! Nd6 53 Kf6 Nc4 54 Bc5 a5



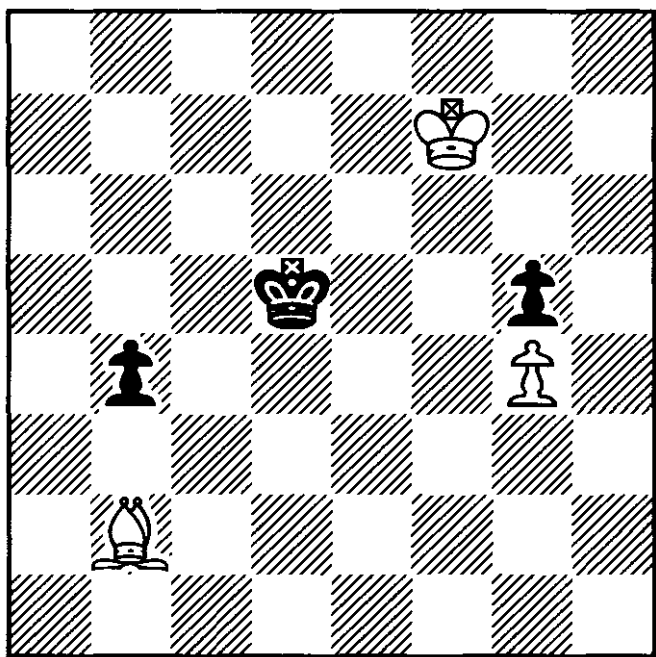
55 Kg7!

Boris: Not the only way to win, but the shortest way.

55...axb4 56 axb4 Ne5 57 Bd4! Nf3 58 Bc3 c5! 59 bxc5 Kc6 60 f6 Bc4 61 Nd3! b4 62 Ne5+ Nxe5

62...Kxc5 63 Bxb4+ Kxb4 64 Nxf3 was also winning.

63 Bxe5 Kxc5 64 f7 Bxf7 65 Kxf7 Kd5 66 Bb2 1-0



Boris: In the final position, if 66...Ke4 then 67 Kg6 Kf4 68 Kh5 and White wins.

Joel: In several of the games we have studied you have taken very strong players into simplified positions only to outplay them. Were you considered at the time to have great technique, to be very strong in the endgame, or simply to excel in these kind of positions? My understanding was that you preferred complicated, messy, tactical games so this comes as a surprise to me.

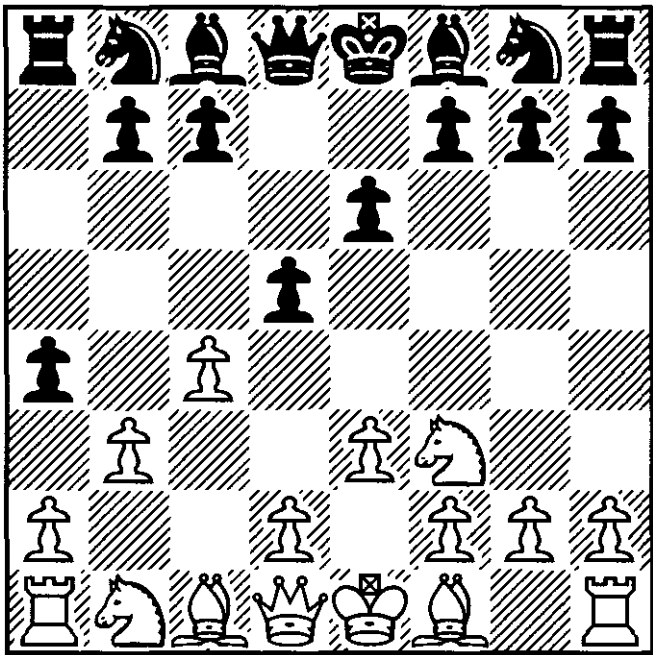
Boris: In this game, the logic of the struggle demanded simplification of the position. Strong players have to be ready to play all kinds of chess. I think the main topic of this game is prophylaxis, which prevented his counterplay and permitted me to maintain my opening advantage the entire game.

Joel: Your comments about being too general I think are very important for me. In addition to general considerations, I will make sure to support them with concrete calculations as much as possible. For me this is the great lesson I learned from this game.

Game Fourteen
B.Gulko-A.Beliavsky
Groningen 1993
Réti Opening

Boris: This game was from the qualification tournament for the candidate matches. The winner of the candidate matches would earn the right to challenge Kasparov for the world championship. Eight players from this tournament played in candidates matches, which Anand won (I lost my match with Short in the play-offs). Beliaavsky and I started very well and were leaders in the qualification tournament. Beliaavsky's attitude towards the opening during that time was that he only played the Queen's Gambit Declined and he was quite a specialist, so I tried to create something new and not very theoretical as early as move three.

1 Nf3 d5 2 c4 e6 3 b3 a5 4 e3 a4!?



Boris: Black tried to play aggressively and to use my third move against me; i.e. to fight for the initiative.

5 bxa4!?

Boris: This is an unusual reaction from White. The normal method would be to play 5 Bb2 axb3 6 axb3 Rxa1 7 Bxa1 Nc6 8 Be2 Nb4 and, because of the very good

position of the black knight, the position is equal. What I played is a positional sacrifice. It is clear that Black will regain the pawn, but while he is busy doing this White hopes to create chances on the other side of the board.

5...Nd7 6 Nc3?!

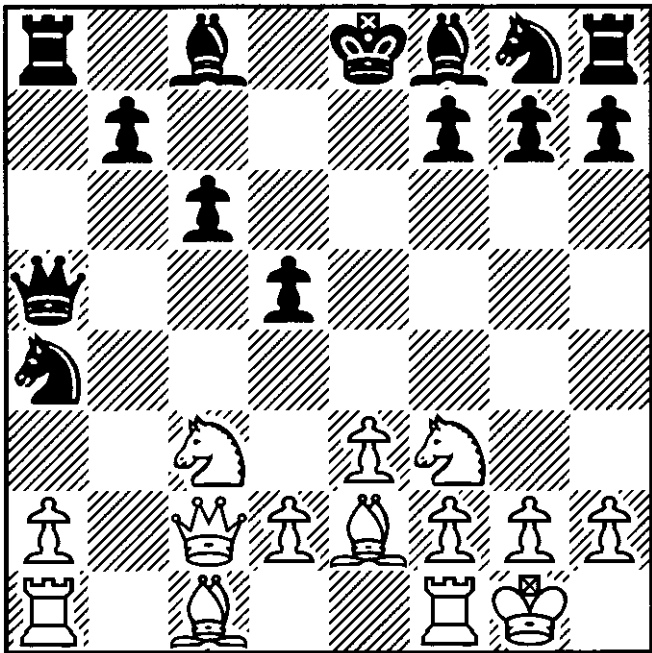
Boris: This is a small inaccuracy. To play in the center I had to exchange on d5 and it was better to play it immediately: 6 cxd5 exd5 7 Nc3, not giving Black the option to take on d5 with the knight.

6...c6

Boris: Black doesn't take advantage of White's inaccuracy. Better was 6...Ngf6!? 7 cxd5 Nxd5 and Black exchanges the knight on c3, which guards the a4-pawn.

7 cxd5 exd5 8 Be2 Nc5 9 0-0 Qa5 10 Qc2 Nxa4

Boris: 10...Nf6 cannot be recommended because of 11 Ba3!? Nxa4 12 Bxf8 Kxf8 (12...Nxc3 13 Bxg7 Nxe2+ 14 Kh1 would not be good for Black) 13 Nxa4 Qxa4 14 Qc5+ Kg8 15 Qe7 with a clear advantage to White.



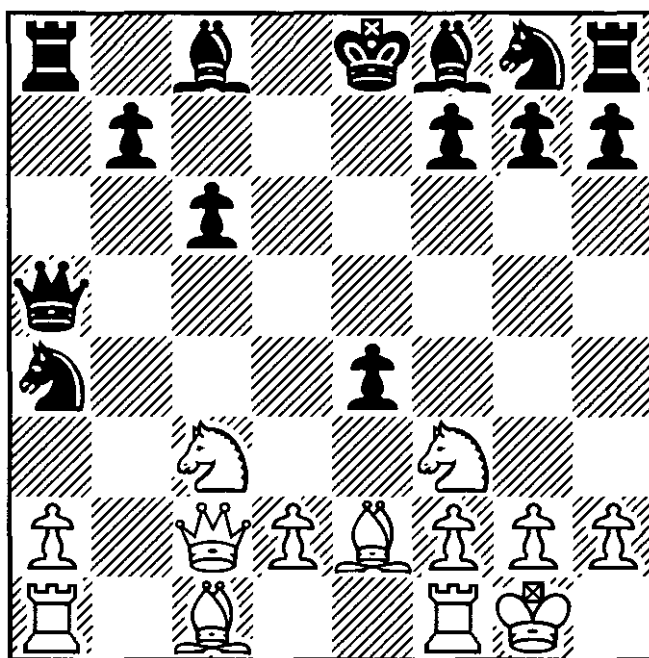
Exercise: What will be White's plan and how to execute it? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I think the critical factor is that White has a lead in development, a time advantage. Therefore, he must figure out a way to keep the initiative (i.e. find an object of attack) and prevent Black from catching up in development. The move 11 e4 suggests itself because it threatens to open up the game with the black king in

the center. Black can answer by either 11...dxe4 or ignore the e-pawn and get on with his development with 11...Nf6. Both moves open the e-file, which creates initiative.

Boris: Very good! Your considerations are correct.

11 e4! dxe4



Exercise: Which piece must recapture on e4? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: White has a choice of recaptures: 12 Qxe4+ or 12 Nxe4. I prefer 12 Nxe4 because it creates problems for Black's development. For example, 12...Nf6 allows 13 Nxf6+ which ruins Black's kingside pawn structure, and 12...Nge7 blocks the dark-squared bishop and allows 13 Nd6+, which is probably winning. 12 Nxe4 also keeps Black's knight out on the rim. 12 Qxe4+ creates an initial problem but it seems like it helps Black develop (he can play 12...Be7 followed by ...Nf6, ...Qc7, ...O-O, and then bring the knight back in the game with tempo).

Boris: Your consideration is absolutely correct, though very often chess players are inclined to check the king. To find the correct move White had to calculate very long variations and my intuition led me to this reflexive move, which was wrong.

12 Qxe4+?

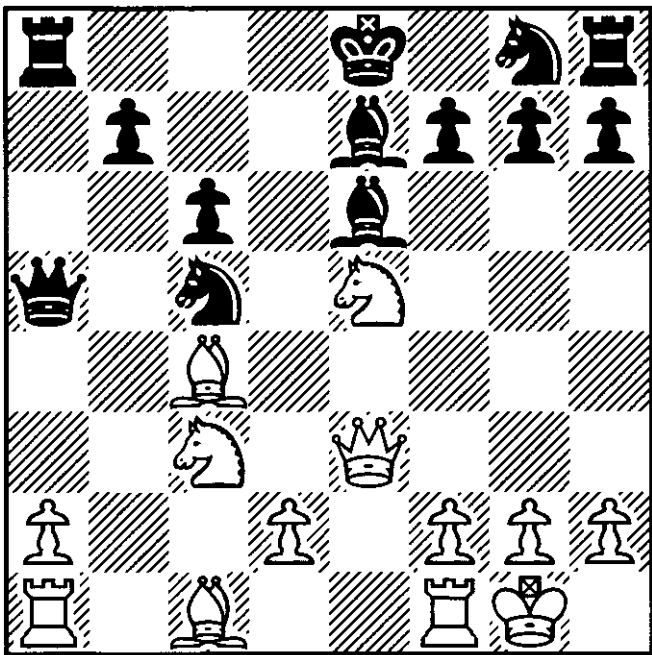
Boris: Correct was 12 Nxe4! and Black doesn't have a way to finish development comfortably: 12...Bf5 (or 12...Be7 13 d4 Nf6 14 Nxf6+ Bxf6 15 Bd3 h6 16 Re1+ with advantage to White) 13 d4 O-O-O 14 Bf4 Nf6 15 Bd3 and the black king is in danger.

Joel: I didn't consider the moves 12...Be7 or 12...Bf5, but found the correct continuation.

Boris: You considered moves that were really bad, but your intuition found you the correct move. To consider all the variations, all the possible moves, is too much.

12...Be7 13 Bc4 Nc5 14 Qe5

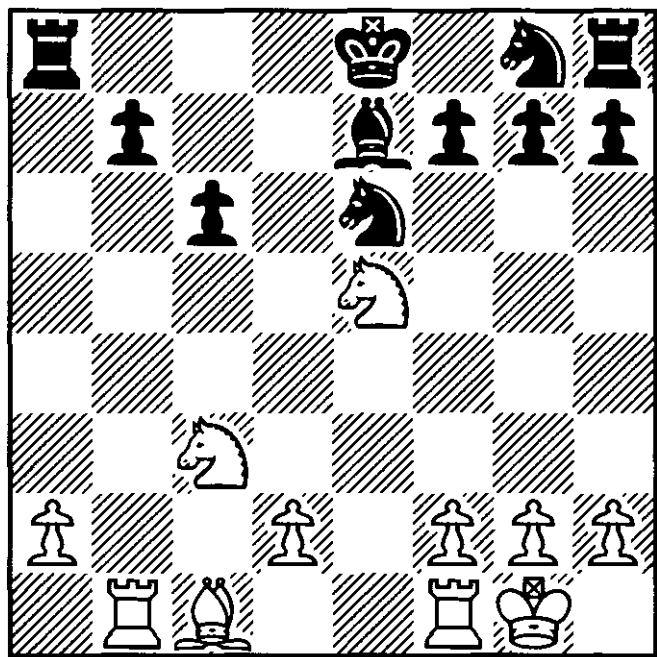
Boris: 14 Qe3 was insufficient for keeping the initiative. I calculated something like 14...b5?! 15 Bxf7+! Kxf7 16 Ne5+ Ke8 (or 16...Kf8 17 Nxc6 Qb6 18 Nxe7 Nxe7 19 Qf3+ winning) 17 Qf3 Nf6 18 d4 Ne6 19 Nxc6 Bb7 20 Re1 Nxd4 21 Rxe7+ Kf8 22 Qxf6+! gxf6 23 Bh6+ mating; but Black can play 14...Be6! 15 Ne5 and then:



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 4)

Boris: Not 15...Nf6? 16 d4 with advantage to White, but 15...Nh6! and now White doesn't have 16 d4? because of 16...Nf5 17 Qd2 Rd8!.

14...Be6 15 Bxe6 Nxe6 16 Rb1 Qxe5 17 Nxe5



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: Black needs to complete his development and defend the b-pawn but I don't see a way of doing it. 17...Nd8 defends the pawn and prepares ...Nf6 but Black will run into trouble on the e-file; e.g. 18 Re1 Nf6 19 Nc4 prevents Black from castling and threatens Nd6+. The combination of the open b-file, the rook on b1, and a2-a4-a5-a6 make 17...0-0-0 very unappealing, not to mention 18 Nxf7 winning the exchange. 17...Nf6 drops the b-pawn and doesn't allow Black to castle anyway because the bishop on e7 is hanging. Something simple like 17...Rb8 loses to 18 Nxc6. I think Black has to give up the hope of short castling, try to keep the position closed, and castle by hand. If we return to 17...Nd8 18 Re1 Black can play 18...Kf8! holding everything (for now). So I think 17...Nd8 is what I would play.

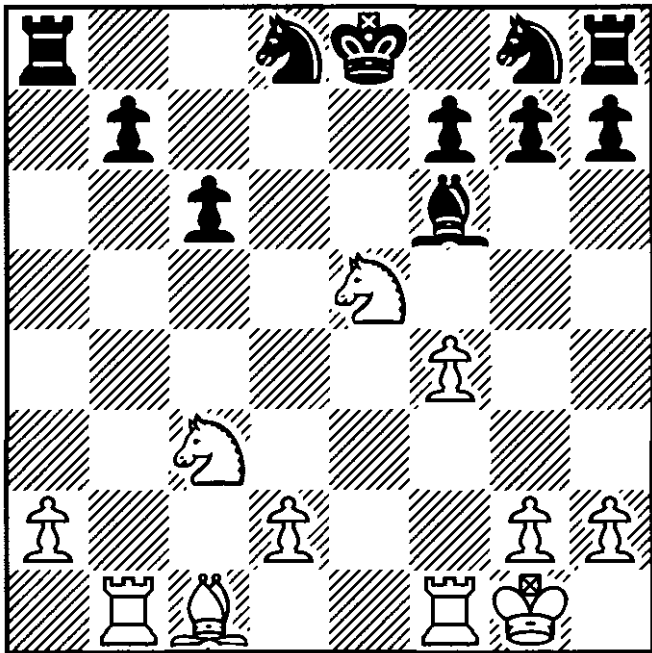
Boris: Here starts the battle of two pawns: a2 and b7. If White has the opportunity to play a2-a4 the b7-pawn will become weak, and if Black is able to play ...b7-b5 then the a2-pawn will become weak. It is because of this that your suggestion leaves something to be desired. After 17...Nd8 White could play 18 Re1 Kf8 19 Nd7+ Ke8 20 Nb6 Ra5 21 a4! achieving a positional advantage.

17...Bf6?

Boris: Black had to play the ugly-looking 17...f6! 18 Nf3 b5! (18...0-0-0 19 Re1 Nf4 20 d4 Nd3 was sufficient for equality) 19 Re1 Kf7 20 d4 b4 21 d5 Nc7! and Black realizes chances that White gave him after 5 bxa4.

18 f4! Nd8

Boris: Of course, the knight on d8 is not attractive but alternatives are even worse: 18...Nxf4? 19 Rxf4 Bxe5 20 Re4 f6 21 d4 winning; or 18...Bxe5 19 fxe5 b5 20 a4! bxa4 21 Ne4 with a strong attack.



Exercise: How does White cement his positional advantage? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: So Black plays ...Nd8 after all. How should White proceed? The king is still sitting in the center and the b7-pawn, while defended, is vulnerable to attack. I am looking at two knight moves: 19 Ne4 and 19 Nc4. Both threaten Nd6+ but I think 19 Nc4 is stronger because it does not block the e-file. After, for example, 19...Bxc3 20 Re1+ Ne7 21 dxc3 the a2-pawn is hanging, but Black cannot castle and White is threatening Nd6+. Black cannot respond with 21...Kd7 because of 22 Nb6+ winning the rook.

Boris: In this position, Black has enough time to finish development. As I indicated before, the battle is between the a2- and b7-pawns so here I played a2-a4, which cements b7 as a long-term positional weakness.

Joel: It seems there are times when I misjudge the changing nature of the advantage. For example, before I correctly understood that the advantage was temporary and White needed to play for the initiative. Here, I am operating as though that were still the case, when it seems the advantage has transformed to a long-term positional one.

Boris: Very good! You are absolutely correct. To find the correct solution you had to calculate variations. After 19 Nc4 (which you suggested) White's initiative would evaporate after 19...Bd4+ 20 Kh1 b5, when it is White's a2-pawn that has become weak.

19 a4!

Boris: Now White's a-pawn is better than Black's b-pawn.

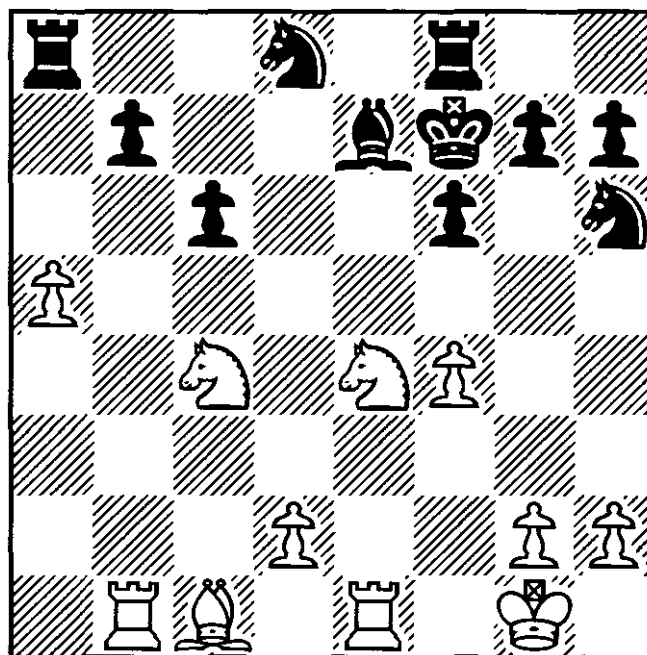
19...Be7

Boris: Black recognized his mistake with 17...Bf6 and returns to the plan of playing ...f7-f6, which I suggested in the notes. He would lose in the case of 19...Ne7 20 Ba3 O-O 21 Ne4 Re8 22 Nd6 Rf8 23 Nd7.

20 Re1! f6 21 Nc4 Kf7 22 Ne4 Nh6 23 a5!

Boris: One more nail in the coffin of the b7-pawn.

23...Rf8



Exercise: Which maneuver increases White's advantage? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I seem to be drawn to 24 Ned6+ and can't find anything wrong with it. I am worried that it exchanges off too many pieces, but if my calculations (at least in one variation) are correct then White gets both rooks on the seventh rank. For example, 24...Bxd6 25 Nxd6+ Kg8 (25...Kg6 may be possible) 26 Nxb7 (holding the a5-pawn and threatening Ba3) 26...Nxb7 27 Rxb7 Rxa5 28 Re7 when I think Black is in trouble (at least he is in the glutton role!).

Boris: But if we continue your line 28...Nf5 29 Rec7 Ra1 30 g4 Rxc1+ 31 Kf2 Rc2, it is doubtful that White can win this position. However, White can zigzag his rook to the seventh rank (without exchanging the unfortunate bishop on e7, which you allowed), making Black's position hopeless. One of the main reasons why Black's position is bad is because the bishop on e7 is bad.

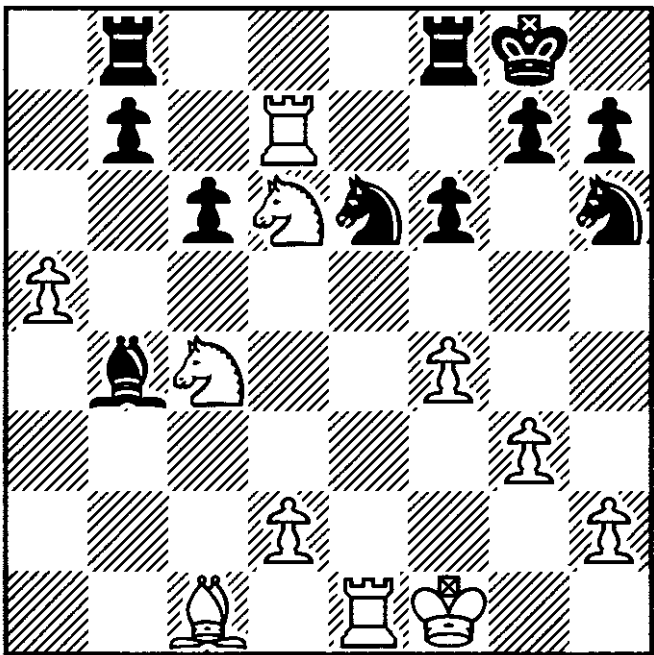
24 Rb3! Kg8 25 Rd3 Ne6 26 Rd7

Boris: 26 Nf2!? Nxf4 27 Rxe7 Nxd3 28 Nxd3 Rf7 29 Rxf7 Nxf7 30 Nc5 was also attractive, but here White would have more technical difficulties.

26...Bc5+ 27 Kf1 Rab8

Boris: Again Beliavsky plays the most stubborn defense. Worse was 27...Ng4 28 g3! or 27...Rf7 28 Rxf7 Kxf7 29 Nxc5 Nxc5 30 Ba3 Nd3 31 Re7+ and White is winning.

28 g3 Bb4 29 Ned6!



29...Nc5

Boris: Black would lose after 29...Bxd6 30 Nxd6 Nc5 31 Rc7 Rfd8 32 Ree7 Rxd6 33 Rxc7+ Kf8 34 Ba3 Rd5 35 d4!.

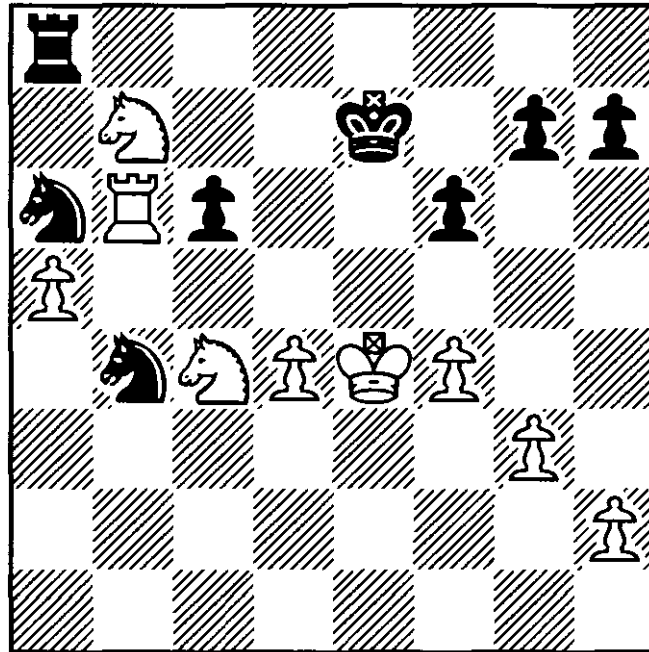
30 Rc7 Na6 31 Rxb7

Boris: Finishing the duel of the a2- and b7-pawns in White's favor.

31...Rxb7 32 Nxb7 Nf5 33 Ba3 Bxa3 34 Nxa3 Rb8 35 Rb1 Kf8 36 Rb6 Nd4 37 Nc4 Ke7 38 Kf2 Ra8 39 Rb1 Rb8 40 Rb6 Ra8 41 Ke3 Nc2+ 42 Ke4 Ncb4 43 d4!

Boris: One hundred years ago Bogoljubow wrote a book "1 d2-d4 and White is

winning". I can write the book "43 d2-d4 and White is winning" with only one, but very convincing, example.



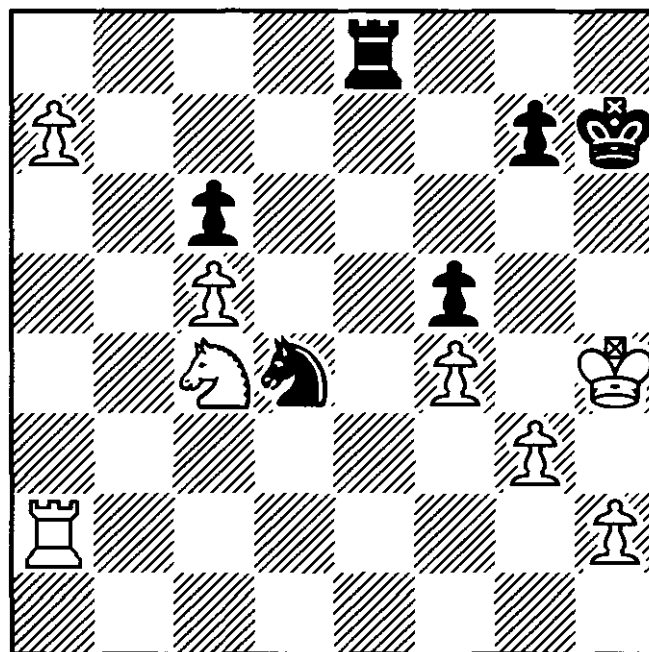
43...Re8 44 Nc5 Kf8+ 45 Kf3 Nxc5 46 dxc5 Nc2 47 a6 Nd4+ 48 Kg4 h5+ 49 Kxh5 Kg8

Boris: Black's last trap was 49...Ke7!? 50 a7 Rh8+ 51 Kg6? (51 Kg4 would win) 51...Rh6+ 52 Kxg7 Nf5+ with perpetual check.

50 a7 Kh7 51 Rb8 Re2 52 Rb2

Boris: 52 a8Q was not bad either.

52...Re8 53 Ra2 f5 54 Kh4 1-0



Lessons with a Grandmaster

Joel: The main lesson for me in this game was the tale of the two pawns, fixing a pawn weakness, and sensing the transformation of the advantage and shifting plans accordingly.

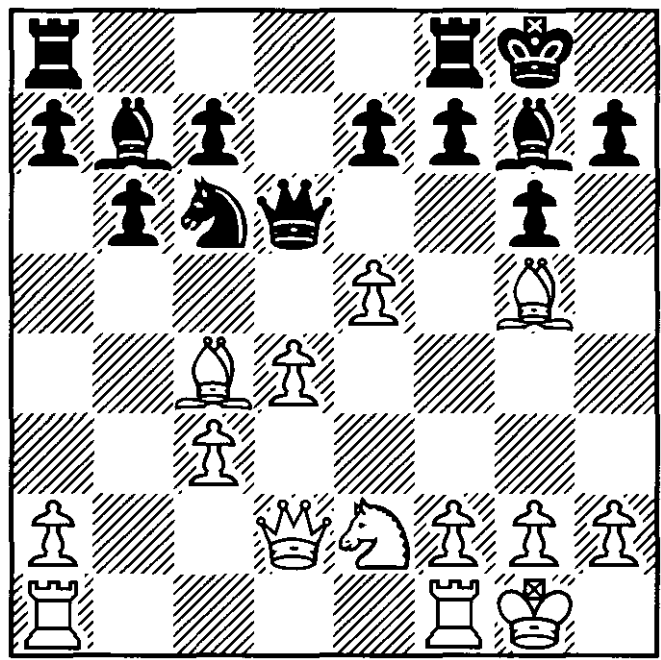
Boris: The most interesting aspect of this game was the relative value of the initiative and pawn weaknesses. Beliavsky and I did not evaluate this correctly all the time. He overestimated the value of the initiative compared to the value of pawn weakness on move 17, permitting me to play 19 a4, when he ran into a difficult position.

Game Fifteen
A.Yusupov-B.Gulko
Hastings 1989/90
Grünfeld Defense

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 d5 4 cxd5 Nxd5 5 e4 Nxc3 6 bxc3 Bg7 7 Bc4 0-0 8 Ne2 Nc6 9 0-0 b6 10 Bg5 Bb7 11 Qd2 Qd6

Boris: This move was introduced by Korchnoi many years ago. I realized later that the best square for the queen was d7. Svidler played it against Kramnik at Tilburg in 1998, with the insignificant difference that White's bishop was on e3 rather than g5.

12 Rad1!?



Exercise: What would follow after 12 e5 - ? (difficulty level 2)

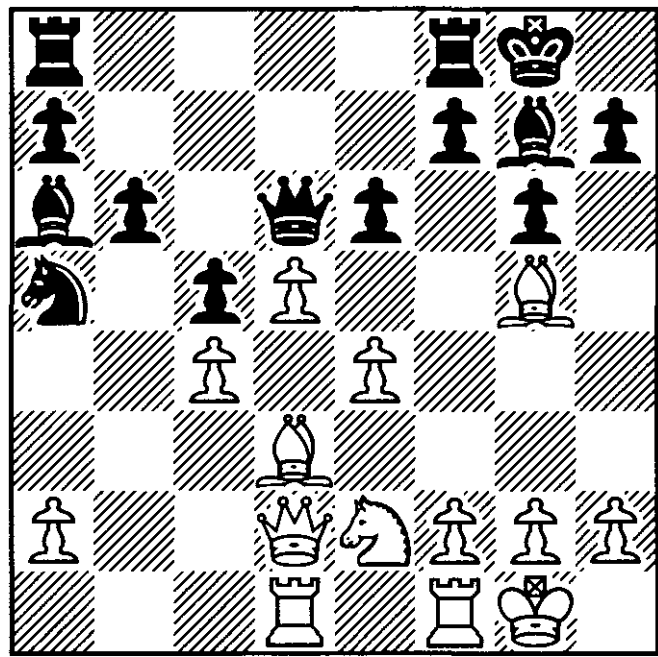
Joel: First I looked at 12...Nxe5 but then noticed that the queen is protected by the bishop. Therefore, I would play 12...Qa3 with idea of ...Na5, ...c7-c5, and ...Rad8.

Boris: 12 e5 has a tactical refutation that was overlooked by Ftacnik too: 12...Nxe5! (L.Ftacnik-B.Gulko, Biel 1988) 13 dxe5 Qc6. This trap is the only advantage of 11...Qd6 over 11...Qd7.

12...Na5 13 Bd3 c5 14 d5 e6!

Boris: This move is much better than 14...c4, because 14...c4 15 Bc2 e6 16 dxe6 Qxe6 17 Nd4!? gives the knight an excellent square. With the pawn on c5 he would not have the d4-square for the knight, which is why I permitted him to support the d5-pawn with 15 c4.

15 c4 Ba6



16 Qc2

Boris: White could not play to maintain two central pawns with 16 Rc1, because after 16...exd5 17 cxd5?! Bxd3 18 Qxd3 f5! 19 f3 (19 Nf4 fxe4 20 Qxe4 Rae8 21 Ne6 Rf5 is not good for White) 19...fxe4 20 fxe4 Nc6! the black knight will occupy e5-square with good prospects.

16...exd5 17 exd5 Qd7!

Boris: Black fixes the disadvantages associated with his earlier 11...Qd6 and vacates the d6-square for the knight.

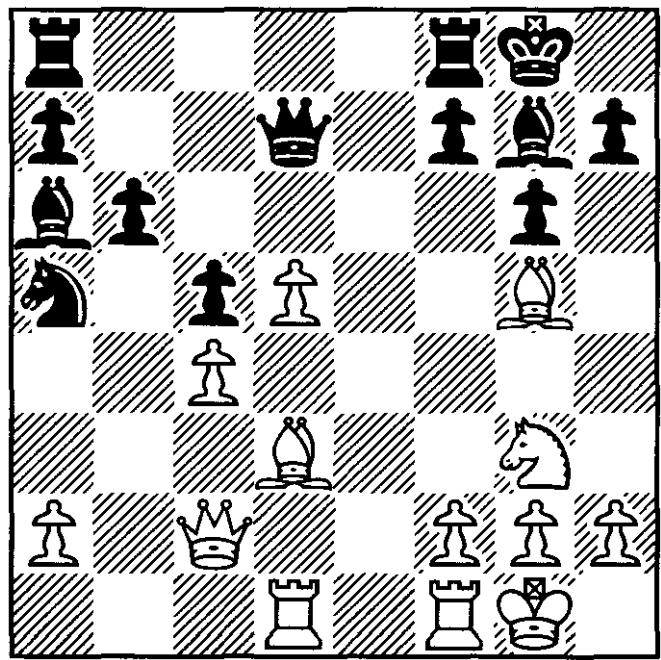
Joel: Can you say something about acknowledging mistakes and what to do about them in a game?

Boris: When I played 17...Qd7 I wasn't thinking about fixing my mistake. I was trying to find the best move in the position and to defend against the threat of Qa4. 17...Qd7 prepares ...Nb7-d6.

Joel: What this suggests to me is that you do not get hung up on mistakes.

Boris: Yes, when we play the game we try to find the best move whether or not we have made a mistake before. You cannot punish yourself or dwell on your mistakes, as it will prevent you from finding future opportunities. You must treat each move objectively and try to find the best move in the position. The game continuation avoids 17...Rae8? 18 Bd2 and White is better because he can exchange on a5, destroying Black's queenside, and if 18...Nb7 then 19 Qa4 is winning.

18 Ng3



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I think White is better. He has a very strong passed d-pawn. Black must come to grips with this pawn immediately. I think it needs to be undermined with ...b6-b5. However, if 18...b5 immediately, White would exchange off pawns and bishops and the d-pawn, supported by the rook on d1 and bishop on g5, will push forward. This will put Black in a very uncomfortable position. Therefore, I think first 18...Nb7 followed by ...Nd6 and then ...b6-b5.

Boris: You're right that 18...b5 is bad, but for the simple reason that White has 19 cxb5 Bxb5 20 Qxc5 winning.

18...Rae8!

Boris: The move you offered is consistent with the overall plan but it allows White a very strong knight sacrifice: 18...Nb7?! 19 Nf5!? gxf5 20 Bxf5 Qd6 21 Bxh7+ Kh8 22 Rd3 with a very strong attack.

19 Bd2

Boris: Now the knight sacrifice is not dangerous because Black has ...Ba6-c8, controlling the h3-square where White's rook needs to go; e.g. 19 Nf5? gxf5 20 Bxf5 Qd6 21 Bxh7+ Kh8 22 Rd3 Bc8. White is not promised much either by 19 Rfe1 Rxe1+ 20 Rxe1 Re8 with equality.

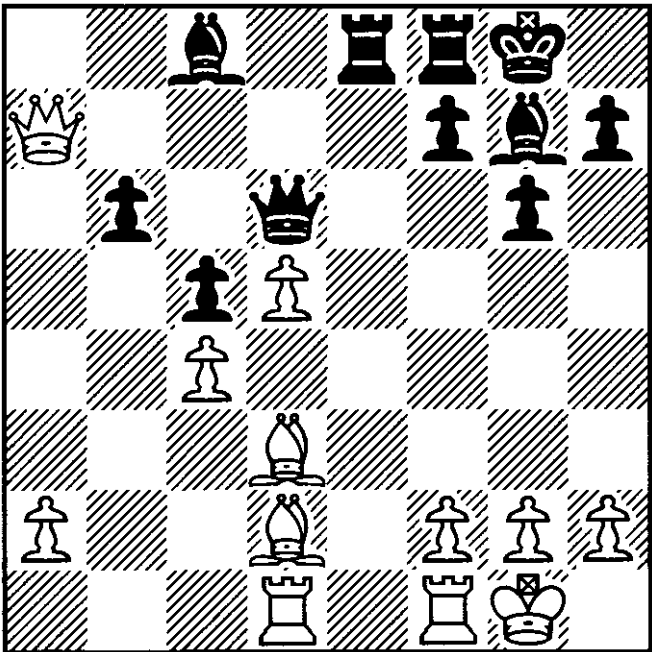
19...Nb7 20 Ne4 Nd6!

Boris: Black has to exchange knights because 20...f5 21 Ng5 Nd8 22 h4 gives White a lasting initiative.

21 Nxd6 Qxd6 22 Qa4?!

Boris: My opponent evaluated the position too optimistically and decided to take the a7-pawn. However, the queen on a7 will be excluded from the game, allowing Black a strong and sudden kingside counterattack. Better was 22 Rfe1 Bc8 with an equal position.

22...Bc8 23 Qxa7



Exercise: How can Black use the time White will need to return his queen to his advantage? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Black can gain time on the queen, but he must take away the retreat square that allows White to hold the pawn by playing 23...Bd7 (controlling a4), followed by ...Rea8 and ...Rxa2.

23...Be5!

Boris: The move you offered, 23...Bd7, would be good, if it were not for 24 Rb1 b5 25 Be3!, attacking c5, and White is much better.

24 h3?!

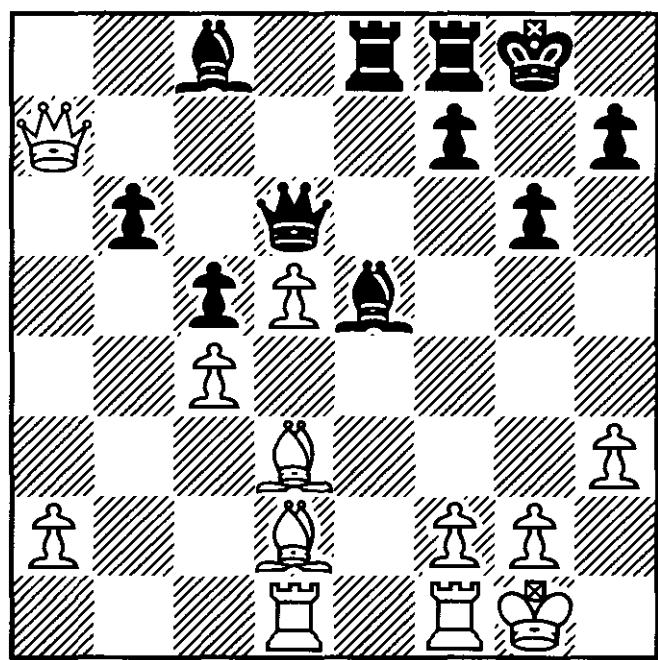
Boris: Other possibilities include:

a) If White tries to win the exchange with 24 Bh6? then Black wins with 24...Bxh2+ 25 Kh1 Bf4 26 Bxf8 Qxf8 27 Kg1 Qh6 28 g3 Bg4.

b) If he tries to block with 24 g3? then 24...Bh3 25 Bh6 Qf6 and Black has an extremely strong attack because ...Qf3 is threatened, and if White tries to prevent it with 26 f4 then 26...Bd4+ 27 Kh1 Ra8 28 Qb7 Rxa2 is winning.

c) 24 h4!? was interesting but very un-human.

d) 24 f4! was White's strongest move. The position after 24...Bd4+ 25 Kh1 is good for computer analysis. Black can choose between 25...b5, 25...Bd7, or Rybka's 25...Bg4, when in all cases the positions are very unclear.



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: The queen is out of play and White has just given Black a target on h3. I'm thinking about sacrificing on h3 either now or after ...Bh2+ to take advantage of White's pieces being offside. If 24...Bxh3 25 gxh3 Bh2+ 26 Kh1 Re5 (with the threat of ...Rh5) then White cannot cover the h5-square with the bishop because the e2-

square is covered. This looks like a strong attack. Can White regroup and defend? Yes, 27 f4 (hitting the rook and threatening Kxh2 defends) 27...Bxf4 28 Bxf4 pinning the rook wins. Therefore, 24...Bxh3 is dubious and 24...Bd7 should be played with the idea of regaining the a-pawn.

Boris: You're right that 24...Bxh3 doesn't work. It is necessary to find a way to attack the king, which 24...Bd4! accomplishes. Now Black creates the threat of 25...Bxh3 26 gxh3 Qg3+. With 24...Bd4! White really does not have time to bring the queen back for defense.

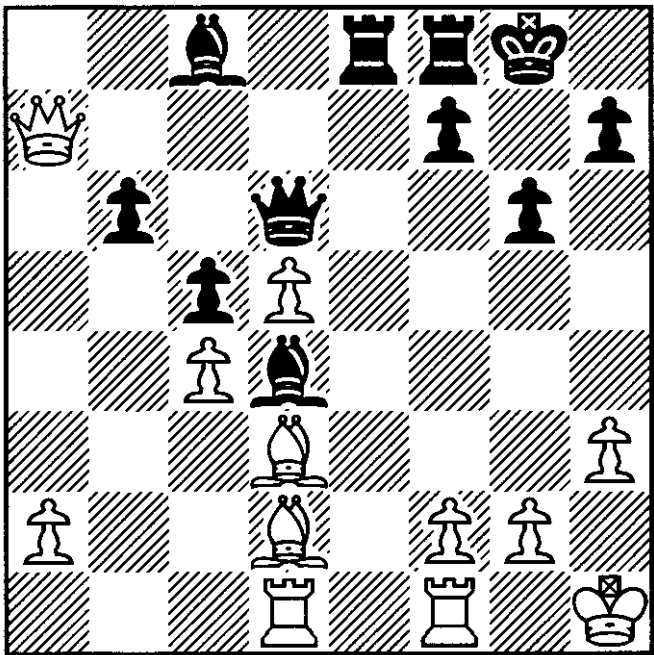
24...Bd4!!

Joel: Why did you play 23...Be5 and then 24...Bd4 - ?

Boris: After provoking the weakness on h3, Black is ready to sacrifice on h3 and give check on g3. In order to accomplish this, I need to pin the f2-pawn.

25 Kh1

Boris: If White plays 25 Qa3 my plan was 25...Bxh3 26 Bxg6 (26 gxh3 Qg3+ 27 Kh1 Qxh3+ 28 Kg1 Be5 is a typical mating pattern that Korchnoi exploited to win against Karpov in one of their match games – 1974 match, game 21) 26...Bxg2! 27 Bxh7+ Kxh7 28 Kxg2 Rg8+ 29 Kh1 (*Rybka* shows that 29 Kf3! Rg6 30 Qd3 Kg7 31 Bf4 Qf6 was also insufficient for defense) 29...Re3! 30 Bxe3 Qg6 31 Qd3 f5 with a beautiful mate.



Exercise: How can Black develop the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

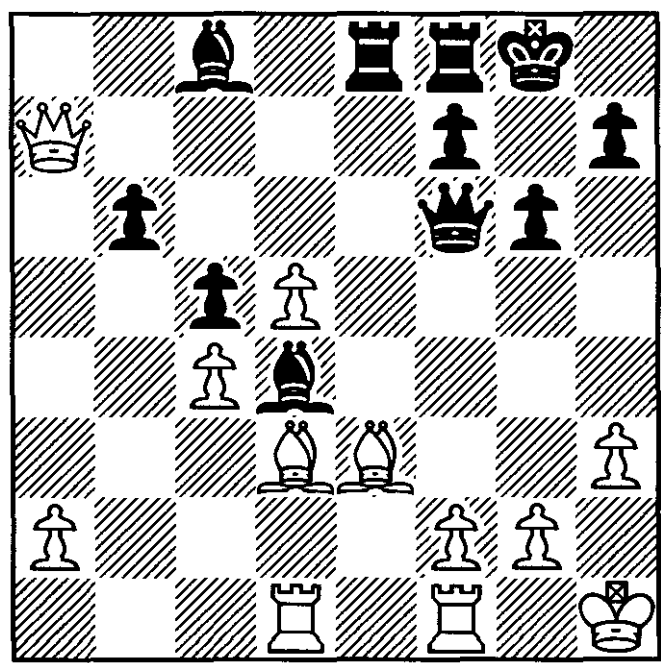
Joel: What is the drawback of 25 Kh1 - ? It seems like a good prophylactic move. It seems to me that the queen must enter the kingside in some forceful way. The rook cannot do it because the only square available (e5) would lead to Bf4 pinning the rook. The only squares available for the queen are f6 and e5. I like 25...Qf6 because it holds the pawn on b6 a move longer and provides a route to h4 where, with the bishop, she will attack f2 and threaten ...Bxh3.

Boris: Yes. I would add that the other square available to the queen is f3, after the sacrifice on h3.

25...Qf6! 26 Be3

Boris: If White tries 26 Qc7 Black wins with 26...Be5 27 Qc6 Qh4 and there is no defense against 28...Bxh3. If White plays 26 f4, then 26...Bg4! 27 Rde1 Qh4 again has the strong threat of ...Bxh3.

The correct but very difficult move was 26 Kh2, and the only way to keep up the initiative is 26...Bg4!! (the tempting 26...Bxh3 fails to 27 Kxh3! Re5 28 Rde1 Rh5+ 29 Kg3, when the white king is surprisingly invulnerable; e.g. 29...Qh4+ 30 Kf3 f5 31 Ke2 Qg4+ 32 f3 Qxg2+ 33 Kd1 Rh2 34 Bc1! and White defends) 27 Rb1 (if 27 hxg4 Qh4+ 28 Kg1 Be5 29 g3 Bxg3 and Black is winning) 27...b5! 28 Rxb5 Be2 with a strong initiative for Black. You can easily find this line if you are *Rybka*. Let's return to human chess.



Exercise: What would you play with Black? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: White plays another nice preventative move, this time blocking the dark-squared bishop. This is so important he is willing to incur an isolated and backward e-pawn for it. The question is whether to accept or continue with the attack. I think 26...Qh4 is strong because it threatens ...Bxh3. For example, after 26...Qh4 27 Bxd4 Bxh3 Black is threatening a discovered check on the king (guaranteeing a draw) as well as recapturing the bishop on d4.

Boris: It looks like your suggestion is enough for equality but Black doesn't need to prepare the sacrifice on h3.

26...Bxh3! 27 Bxd4 cxd4!

Boris: Black avoids the perpetual with 27...Bxg2+ 28 Kxg2 Qg5+, as he already has a decisive advantage.

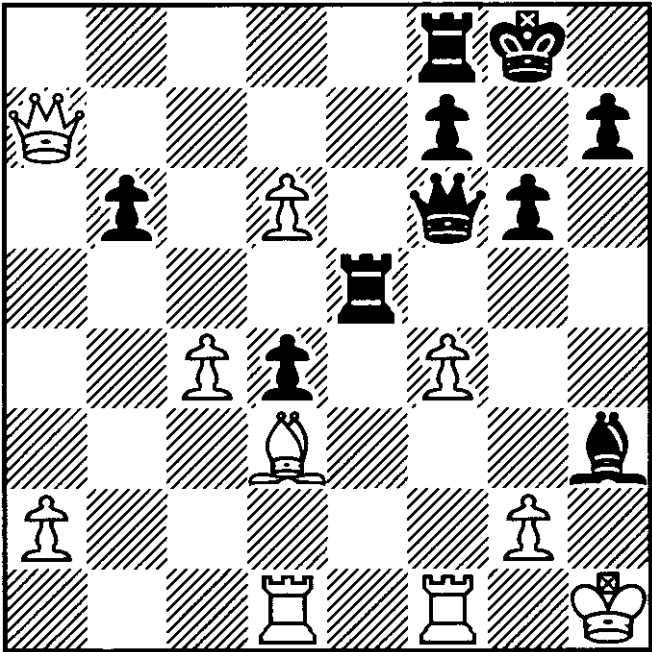
28 d6

Boris: If 28 gxh3 Qf3+ 29 Kh2 Re5 30 Rg1, then 30...Rfe8! and Black is winning.

Joel: Why? That's not immediately obvious.

Boris: Because of the following forced continuation: 31 Qd7 Qxf2+ 32 Rg2 Qf4+ 33 Kh1 Re1+ 34 Rxe1 Rxe1+ 35 Rg1 Qf3+ 36 Kh2 Qxd3 37 Rxe1 Qd2+, when Black will take the rook with check and the d-pawn will be unstoppable.

28...Re5 29 f4

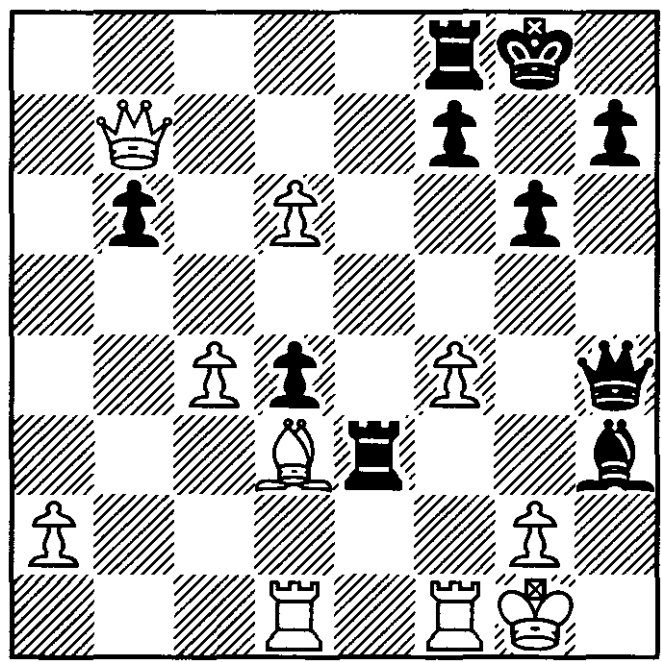


Exercise: What should Black play? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: The variation I am considering is 29...Bxg2+ 30 Kxg2 Ra5 (hitting the queen) 31 Qb7 (trying to come to the aid of the king) 31...Rxa2+, and here we have three variations: 1) 32 Rf2 Rxf2+ 33 Kxf2 Qxf4+ 34 Qf3 Qxd6 with four pawns for the piece; 2) 32 Kg1 Qh4 and mate cannot be prevented without giving up a lot of material; and 3) 32 Kh3! and Black has a hard time getting at the enemy king, for example, 32...Qe6+ 33 Kg3 Qe3+ 34 Rf3 and White is safe. Therefore, I would have to consider 29...Rh5.

Boris: You didn't consider all of the candidate moves. Unfortunately after 30...Ra5 in your first line White has 31 Qe7 and Black is forced to trade queens. Against your suggestion 29...Rh5, White has 30 Qe7 as well. It is critical to control the e7-square, which is why 29...Re3 is the only move.

29...Re3! 30 Qb7 Qh4 31 Kg1

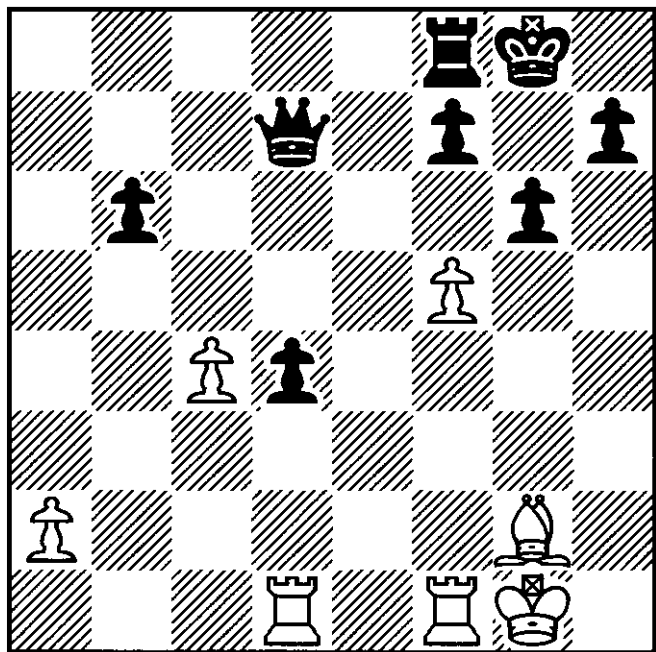


Exercise: How does Black win? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: It is tempting to simply take the pawn with 31...Bxg2, but after 32 Qxg2 Rg3 White may still have chances because of the d-pawn, although I like Black. Actually, I don't think White can hold the d6-pawn, so this is winning.

Boris: Correct.

31...Bxg2! 32 Qxg2 Rg3 33 Be4 Rxg2+ 34 Bxg2 Qf6 35 d7 Qd6 36 f5 Qxd7



37 Bd5 Qe7 38 Rf3 Qe5 39 Rdf1 g5 40 f6 Re8 41 Kh1 g4 42 Rf5 Qe3 43 Rh5 Re5 44 Rh2 d3 45 Bxf7+ Kxf7 46 Rxh7+ Kg6 47 f7 Kxh7 48 f8Q Qh3+ 0-1

Boris: This game was really sharp. The main idea was that, with the white queen offside, Black had to find the hidden way to create an attack and play with a lot of energy. He could not lose a single tempo because then White’s queen could return to defend, when he would simply be a pawn up. This proves Tarrasch’s rule that *one badly placed piece ruins the whole game* (in this case the white queen on a7).

Joel: I was struck by the long and complicated calculations I made after 29 f4. After a lot of work, I rejected 29...Bxg2+ and simply, without calculating, chose the move 29...Rh5. I think this is a good example of what Kotov was talking about in *Think Like a Grandmaster*. You can’t calculate for one variation and then choose another impulsively. You have to check each candidate move.

Boris: I would add that you also have to figure out *all* candidate moves before calculating.

Game Sixteen
V.Korchnoi-B.Gulko
 Amsterdam 1989
London System

Boris: This was a double round robin tournament that included six grandmasters. In the first part of the tournament, I beat Korchnoi in a typical Catalan in which one inaccuracy in the opening for Black was fatal. He came to this game with a “do or die” attitude.

1 d4 Nf6 2 Nf3 g6 3 c3

Boris: In our two previous games against each other when Korchnoi was White, I played the Grünfeld, which was my main defense to 1 d4 in those years. In both games Black obtained good positions, so in this he decided to avoid the Grünfeld.

Joel: What was it like playing Korchnoi? I remember you telling me that you enjoyed playing Kasparov because you enjoyed sharp tactical chess as did he, but had a harder time playing Karpov who had a very prophylactic style.

Boris: Korchnoi liked complications and liked to complicate positions. All games with him were interesting and not very smooth. When there is a complicated struggle, both sides have a chance to make a mistake. There was always a lot of tension and the games were eventful. This game is a good example.

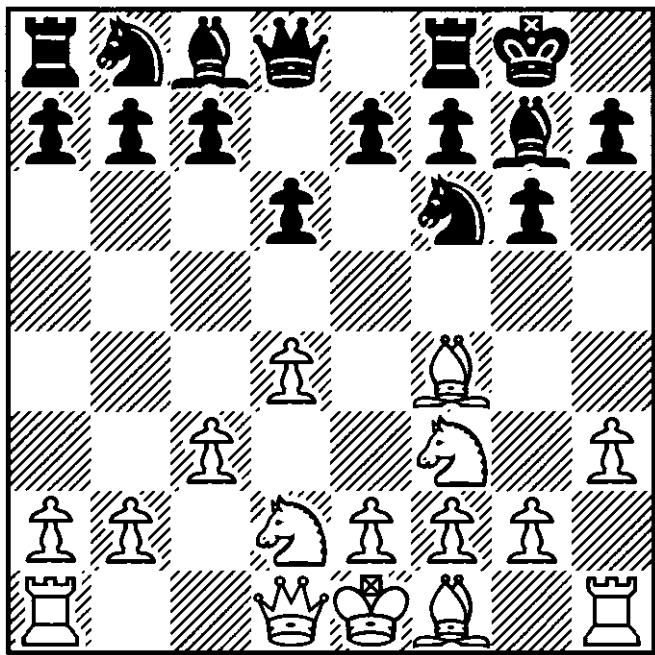
Joel: What was your score against him?

Boris: I have a small plus.

Joel: Which players were toughest for you to play against?

Boris: Tal and Petrosian.

3...Bg7 4 Bf4 d6 5 h3 O-O 6 Nbd2



6...Bf5!?

Boris: White shows that he wants to play e2-e4 so Black prevents it with the very provocative 6...Bf5. Instead, 6...Nbd7 would be a usual King's Indian move; while after 6...c5, as Korchnoi himself played against Bronstein at Budapest in 1961, there would follow 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 e4 with a minimal advantage to White in a quiet position.

7 g4! Bd7?!

Boris: After this move Black's bishop deprives the c8-knight of its best square. Also bad was 7...Be4?! 8 Nxe4 Nxe4 9 Qc2 with advantage to White. 7...Bc8! was best, followed by 8...Nbd7.

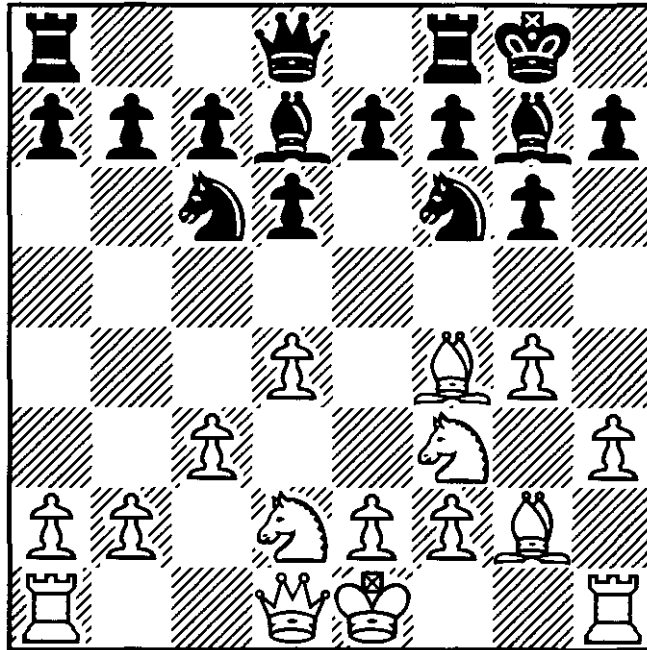
Joel: It is not obvious to me what you would have gained by retreating the bishop to its home square.

Boris: By pushing g2-g4 (provoked by ...Bf5), White weakens his position. To make use of this weakening, Black needs to open the position. With the knight on d7, Black would have a choice of either ...c7-c5 or ...e7-e5. With the knight on c6 (the only option after the text move) ...c7-c5 is impossible; therefore, it is harder for Black to open the position and take advantage of this weakening.

Joel: It also fits nicely with the importance of maintaining your options.

Boris: Yes.

8 Bg2 Nc6



Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: I think Black is threatening 9...Nd5, hitting the bishop and threatening 10...e5. Therefore, White should play 9 Qb3, controlling the d5-square and threatening Qxb7. Now I see that 9 Qb3 runs into 9...Na5. Perhaps a better way is simply to retreat the bishop with 9 Bh2. This takes the sting out of 9...Nd5 and also allows White to play 10 e4 in response, when White has a strong, mobile pawn center and a sizeable space advantage.

Boris: Very good. You found Black's idea and a way to prevent it. The move Korchnoi played is more natural but has the same idea. It is a nice prophylactic move against 9...Nd5. Why 9 Bg3 is more precise than 9 Bh2 we will see in the next annotation.

9 Bg3!

Boris: The natural 9 Qc2? was worse due to 9...Nd5! 10 Bg3 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5, and now 12 Nxe5? would be bad because of 12...Ne3! 13 fxe3 Bxe5 with advantage to Black.

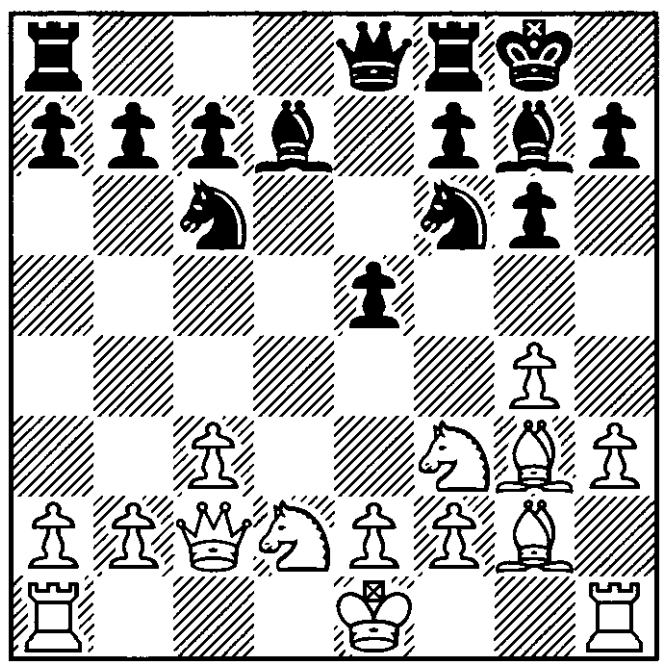
9...Qe8?

Boris: After White's brilliant prophylactic move, Black very soon runs out of good moves. But 9...h5!? would have been an interesting option, when 10 g5 Nd5 11 e4 Nb6 results in an unclear position. Instead, White could play 10 Qc2!? with the idea of castling queenside and sacrificing a pawn. Here we also see why Korchnoi's

9 Bg3 is better than the move you offered (9 Bh2). On h2, the bishop is misplaced because White would like to have an open h-file for his rooks.

10 Qc2 e5 11 dxe5 dxe5?

Boris: It was better for Black to play 11...Nxe5!? 12 Nxe5 dxe5 13 Bxb7 Rb8 14 Bg2 Bc6 when Black has some, if not sufficient, compensation for the pawn.



Exercise: What is the best way for White? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Black has the positional threat of playing 12...e4 followed by ...e4-e3, when he will saddle White with doubled e-pawns on an open file. Therefore, White should play 12 e4, preventing this plan and restricting the activity of Black's dark-squared bishop.

Boris: 12 e4 would not promise White any advantage. After 12 e4, Black has time to harmonize his position with 12...Qe6 (preventing Nd2-c4) and ...Nf6-e8-d6. In addition, both of White's bishops will be restricted. Most importantly, following 12 Nc4 White wins a pawn and Black doesn't have compensation. Therefore, 12 Nc4! is the right solution.

12 Nc4! Nd5

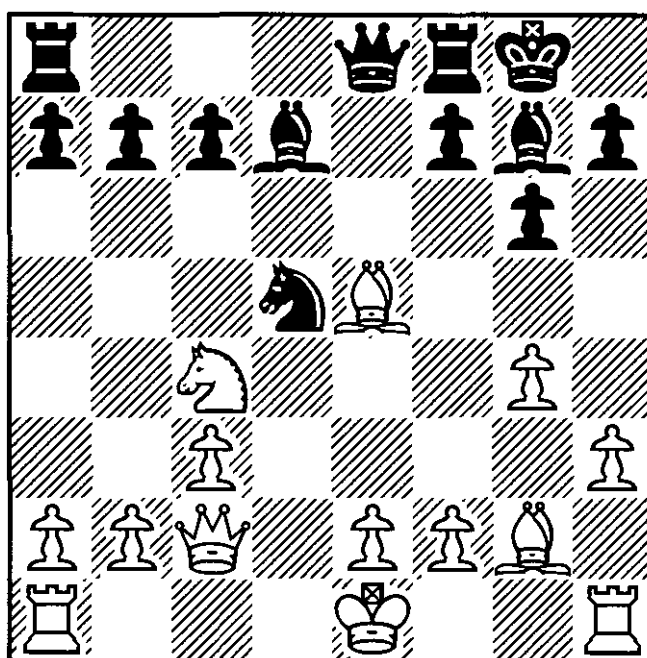
Boris: Now Black's best hope is to create complications. In the case of 12...e4 13 Nfd2 Black would lose the pawn in a quiet position. Although it is not ideal to lose a pawn in the first place, it is worse to do so in a quiet position. Black's task now is to create complications at all cost.

Joel: What do you mean?

Boris: Black has to create a situation in which the opponent must find “only” moves on a narrow road to keep his advantage, as opposed to a wide road when any reasonable move keeps the advantage.

13 Nfxe5! Nxe5 14 Bxe5

Boris: White avoids the trap 14 Bxd5? Bc6 15 Ne3 Nc4 and Black is at least not worse.



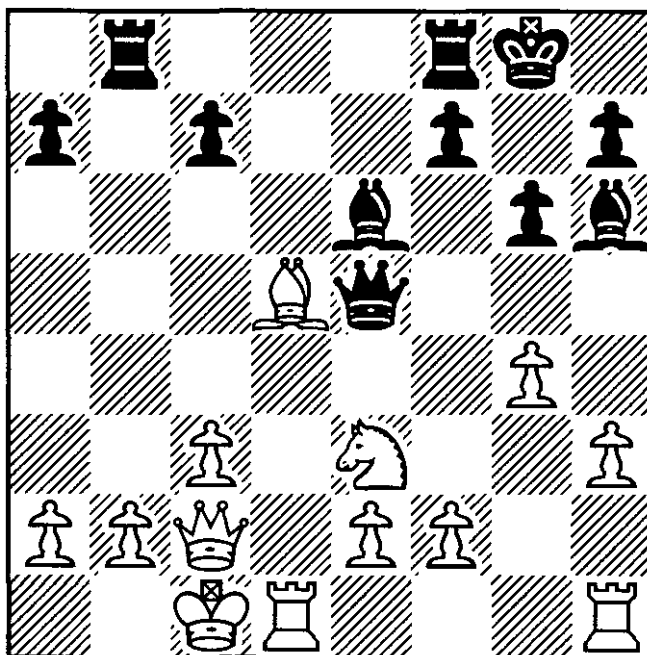
Exercise: Black lost the pawn without compensation.
How can he muddy the waters? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I am thinking about 14...Ba4. The queen has a limited number of squares available to her. If 15 b3, White weakens his queenside, which is where the white king will likely end up. Black can then play 15...Bc6 threatening ...Nd5-b4. If instead White responds by moving his queen then Black can gain counterplay by attacking her. For example, if 15 Qd2 or 15 Qd3, then 15...Rd8 16 Bxd5 c6 17 Bxf7+ Qxf7, attacking both the queen and f2 (White's king also stays stuck in the center).

14...Ne3!

Boris: After your suggestion 14...Ba4 15 b3 Bc6 White would play 16 Bxg7 Kxg7, when the position is relatively calm and White is simply up a pawn. The move I played in the game (14...Ne3) created more problems for White, problems that

O-O-O! Be6 18 Bd5 Bh6 (18...c6 19 Bxe6 fxe6 20 Nc4 Qf4+ 21 Nd2 Qxf2 22 Qe4 was also insufficient)



19 Kb1! – the key move and a difficult one to find.

Joel: Why is this the key move?

Boris: Because in all other cases Black would have reasonable counterplay. For example, 19 Qe4 Qxe4 20 Bxe4 Bxa2 21 Rd7 Bf4 with sufficient counterplay.

Joel: Why is it sufficient?

Boris: Because Black has the two bishops, they are active, and the position can open up to their advantage. In the case of 19 Bxe6 fxe6! 20 Kb1 Rxf2 Black regains the sacrificed pawns; while if 19 Bb3 Bxb3 20 axb3 Bxe3+ 21 fxe3 Qxe3+ 22 Kb1 Qb6! 23 b4 a5 and Black has excellent counterplay.

Joel: What is so excellent about it?

Boris: Here White still has an extra pawn but Black's rooks will be very active on the open queenside files, and at the same time Black's king is completely safe.

Returning to 19 Kb1!, after 19...Bxe3 20 Bxe6 Bxf2 21 Bb3 White has an extra pawn and a good position. Opposite-colored bishops generally increases drawing chances, but here, because of White's strong pressure on f7 and the lack of prospects for Black's bishop, it is better to play 20...Qxe6 21 fxe3 Qxe3, which is more stubborn.

Joel: Is this an example of opposite-colored bishops in the middlegame providing

attacking chances because they control different color complexes?

Boris: Yes.

17...Be6 18 Bd5 Bh6 19 Bxe6

Boris: 19 Nc4? would be a huge mistake, as 19...Qxd5 would win nearly all of White's pieces.

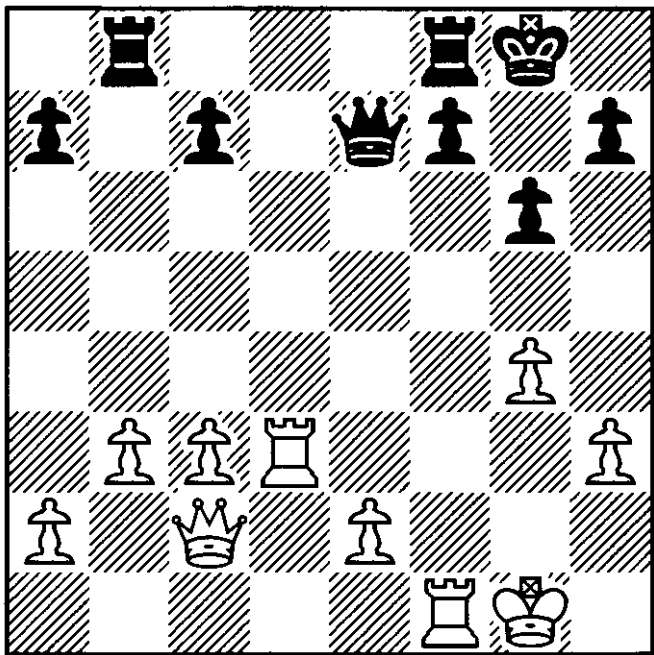
19...Qxe6

Boris: The exchange sacrifice 19...fxe6 20 Rd3! (not 20 Nc4? Qf4, or 20 Ng2? Rxf2 21 Kxf2 Rf8+ 22 Kg1 Be3+) 20...Rxf2 would not yield enough compensation after 21 Kxf2 Rf8+ 22 Ke1 Bxe3 23 Kd1.

20 b3

Boris: In the case of 20 Nd5?! Rfd8! 21 Nb4 Rxd1+ 22 Qxd1 c5 23 Nd3 Qxa2 Black would have real counterplay.

20...Bxe3 21 fxe3 Qxe3 22 Rd3 Qe7 23 0-0



Exercise: Find the best way to create counterplay for Black. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I like 23...f5 because it opens up the position to attack White's king, which is under-defended on the kingside.

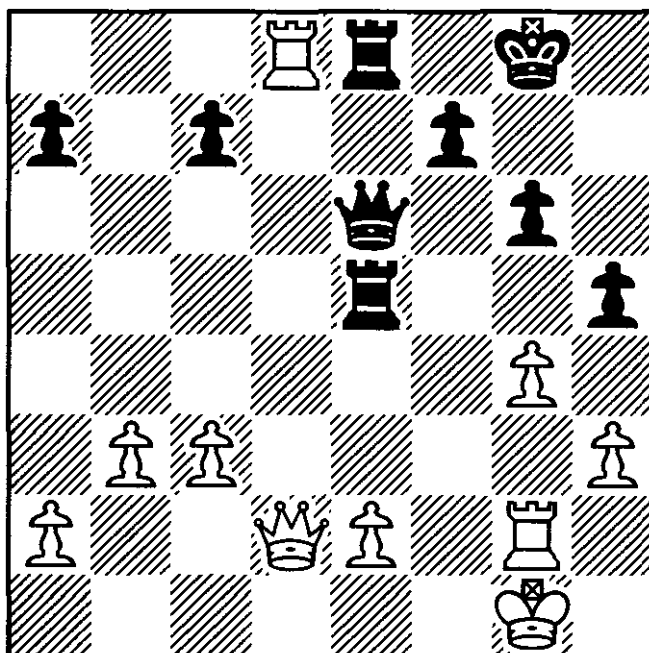
Boris: At this moment I had only four minutes to make seventeen moves, but for me it was easy to play because I knew the general rules for playing this type of

position with major pieces. The main factor, as in my game with Shabalov (Game Eight), is the position of the kings. This position is simultaneously an endgame and a middlegame. Black has to play as if he is in a middlegame (attacking the king) with an eye always on transpositions to the endgame. Here, Black activates his rook with 23...Rb5! and threatens ...Re5 or ...h7-h5. After this, Black has sufficient counterplay for the pawn. The move you offer, 23...f5, weakens the kingside and, more importantly, does not facilitate the activation of the rook on b8. For example, 23...f5 24 gxf5 Qg5+ 25 Kh2 Rxf5 26 Rg3 Qxg3+ 27 Kxg3 Rxf1 28 Qe4 and because Black's pawns are weak, he has to defend very carefully which would be very difficult, especially in time trouble. Instead of defending a difficult position, the move 23...Rb5 makes chances mutual.

23...Rb5! 24 Qd2 h5 25 Rf2 Re5 26 Rg2 Re8 27 Rd7 Qe6!

Boris: Simply worse were 27...Qh4? 28 Qf4 Rf5 29 Qg3 or 27...Qc5+ 28 Qd4, with advantage for White in both cases.

28 Rd8!



Joel: Why do you give this an exclamation point?

Boris: Generally the rook on d7 is not doing anything, it is misplaced. Korchnoi cannot take on c7 (28 Rxc7? Qb6+) and, therefore, gets rid of his misplaced piece. At the same time he eliminates my counterplay on the e-file.

28...Rxd8!

Joel: Why did you give this an exclamation point too?

Boris: Because by accepting the exchange of rooks, I decoy the queen from defending the king.

29 Qxd8+ Kg7 30 Qxc7

Boris: After 30 Qd2 hxd4 31 hxd4 Re4 Black has a good game because of the weakness of White's king.

30...Rxe2 31 Rxe2 Qxe2

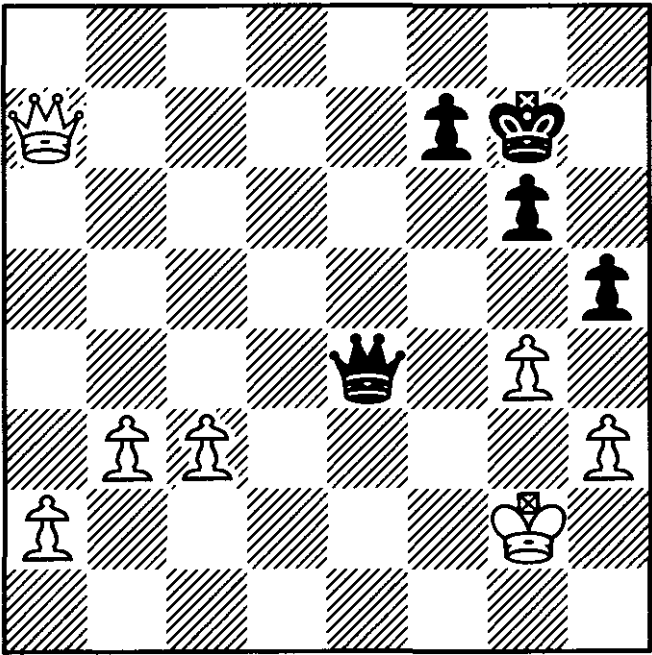
Joel: Endings with queens are very difficult for me. It seems that the slightest weakness in the king's position results in a perpetual check. Here you are even down material (although White's king admittedly is wide open). Nevertheless, you have no pieces left. How did you decide to go into this ending and, I imagine, with confidence?

Boris: I didn't have time for confidence but I thought I had a perpetual check.

32 Qxa7

Boris: After 32 gxf5 Qe1+ Black has perpetual check.

32...Qe1+ 33 Kg2 Qe4+



Exercise: What would you play in the case of 34 Kg3 - ? (difficulty level 3)

Boris: Black would gain the advantage after 34...h4+!. If White's king retreats, Black

will win the h3-pawn and his h4-pawn will become dangerous, and if White takes on h4 it will lead to mate; e.g. 35 Kxh4?? Qe1+ 36 Kg5 Qe5+ 37 Kh4 Kh6.

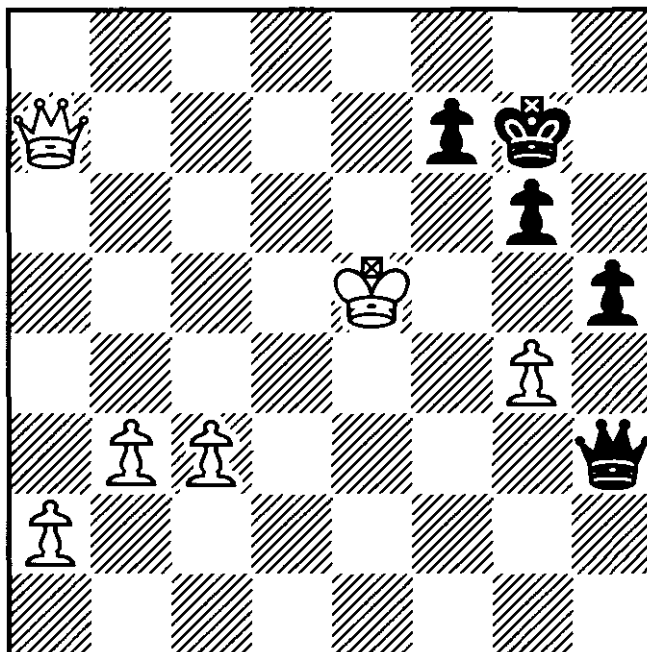
34 Kf2 Qc2+ 35 Kf3 Qd1+ 36 Ke4?

Boris: White missed the appropriate moment to agree on the draw with the safe 36 Kf2. The move 36 Kf4 transposes to the next note after 36...Qf1+.

36...Qh1+ 37 Ke5?

Boris: In this position White would have to play precisely to make a draw: 37 Kf4! Qf1+ 38 Ke4! (again bad was 38 Kg3? h4+!).

37...Qxh3



Exercise: Calculate and evaluate 38 gxh5. (difficulty level 4)

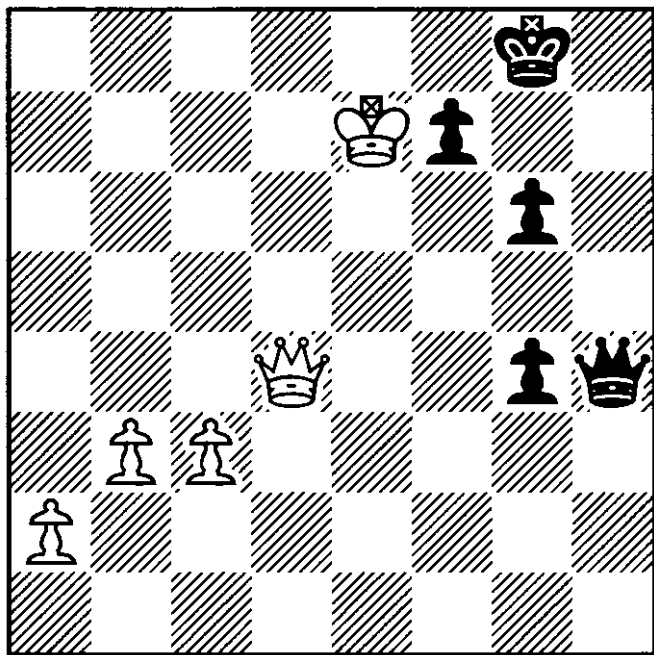
Joel: I cannot calculate these kinds of positions. I always lose or draw by perpetual check. There are too many possibilities.

Boris: Korchnoi was also short on time but realized that 38 gxh5? loses because of 38...Qf5+ 39 Kd6 Qe6+ 40 Kc7 Qe7+ 41 Kb8 Qxa7+ 42 Kxa7 g5! and Black's g-pawn will promote with check. To learn these positions, you have to train with studies using similar material. After you solve several of these endgame studies, it will be easier for you to find the correct solution during the game.

38 Qd4! hxg4 39 Kd6+?

Boris: After so many sudden changes Korchnoi lost his orientation. White could save some chances for the draw with 39 Kf4+ Kh7 40 Qf2, though after 40...f5 Black is probably winning.

39...Kg8 40 Ke7 Qh4+ 0-1



Boris: After 41 Kd7 Qg5 or 41 Ke8 Qe1+ 42 Kd7 g3, the g-pawn will queen.

Boris: What can this game teach? Korchnoi's sophisticated opening play, especially the brilliant prophylactic move 9 Bg3, gave him a big advantage through move 12. The next stage of the game was interesting because of how Black tried to muddy the waters. The crucial moment was on move 17 when White needed deep calculation and evaluation to choose between two alternatives. He chose wrong. After this there was a very instructive middlegame/endgame struggle with major pieces, where White's extra pawn was balanced by the vulnerability of White's king. The queen endgame suddenly became bad for White because of the unfortunate position of his king. It is rare for three connected passed pawns on the queenside not to have any importance in the outcome.

Joel: Can you give some advice about how to play queen endgames with many possibilities for checks and perpetuals?

Boris: As I said before, analyzing queen endgame studies will teach you the typical methods of playing in such situations. The critical issue is the relative safety of the kings and the quality of the pawns. One advanced pawn can outweigh several not-so-advanced pawns.

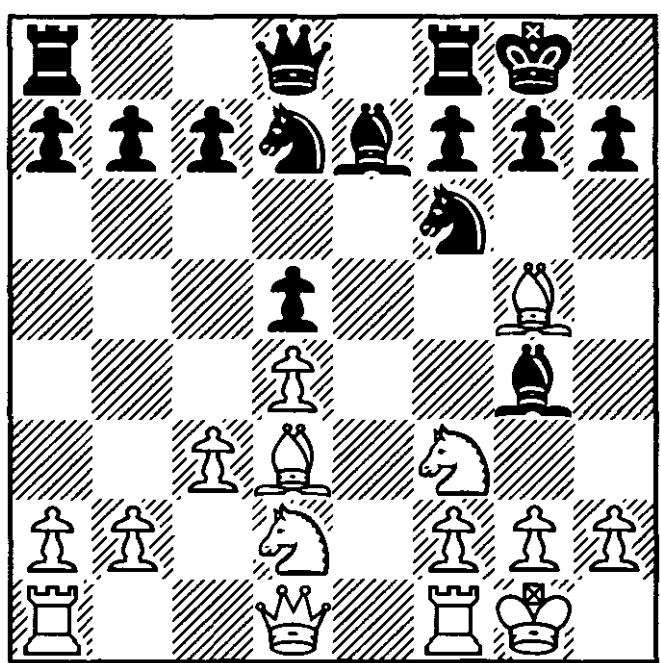
Game Seventeen
A. Shabalov-B. Gulko
Manila Olympiad 1992
French Defense

Boris: This was the last Olympiad where Shabalov played for his native country Latvia. After this, he moved to the USA and became one of America’s strongest players. He is a very sharp player and games against him are always very interesting and exciting.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 exd5 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 Bd3 Be7 6 0-0 0-0 7 Bg5

Boris: The move 7 h3!? deserves attention because it restricts Black’s light-squared bishop. After the game continuation, Black easily finishes development and doesn’t have any problems.

7...Bg4 8 Nbd2 Nbd7 9 c3



9...c5!?

Joel: You decide that it would be profitable to play an isolated queen pawn position. Can you explain the pros and cons in the position that allowed you to make this decision?

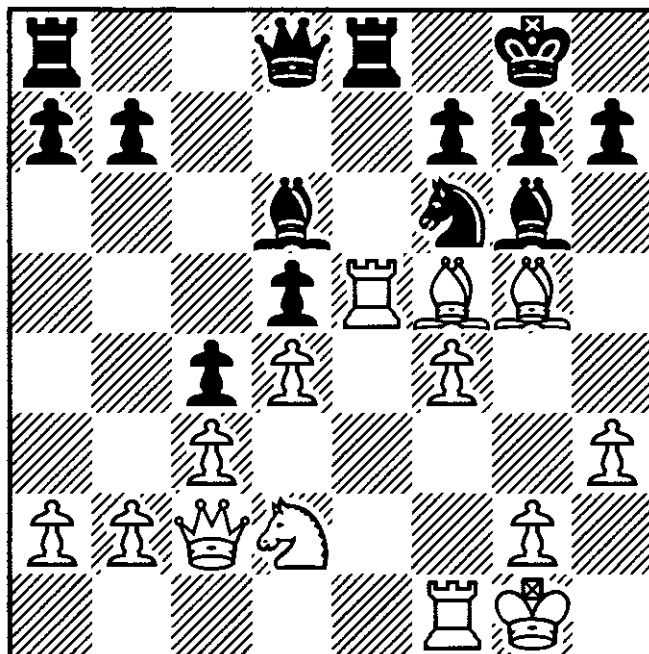
Boris: Here Black could reach an absolutely equal but boring position with 9...h6!? 10 Bh4 Nh5 11 Bxe7 Qxe7 12 h3 Nf4!. Instead, Black tried to complicate. In this particular position, Black doesn't have to worry about the isolated pawn because in the case of 10 dxc5 Nxc5 11 Bc2 Nce4 he has a lot of active possibilities.

10 h3 Bh5 11 Qc2 c4 12 Bf5 Bg6 13 Rae1 Re8 14 Ne5 Nxe5 15 Rxe5

Boris: The continuation 15 dxe5 didn't promise anything after 15...Nd7 16 Bxe7 Rxe7 17 e6 (or 17 Bxg6 fxg6! 18 Nf3 Nc5, intending to sink the knight into d3) 17...Bxf5 18 Qxf5 Nc5 and a knight on d3 would give Black a great position.

15...Bd6! 16 f4?!

Boris: Playing against Shabalov you don't have to worry about quiet draws. After 16 Bxf6 gxf6 17 Rxe8+ Qxe8 18 Nf3 Qf8 an equal drawish position would arise. With his last move White creates complications, as you might expect from Shabalov.



Exercise: What you would play as Black? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: I stared at this position for 45 minutes. It doesn't seem like anything allows Black to avoid structural weaknesses on his kingside. Therefore, I decided that Black must seek activation in exchange. I decided on 16...Qc7. My idea is that, although this allows White to double Black's kingside pawns, White must concede the e-file and the bishop pair. With the bishop on g6, I think my kingside will be safe. Also, the open g-file may come in handy in an attack on White's king.

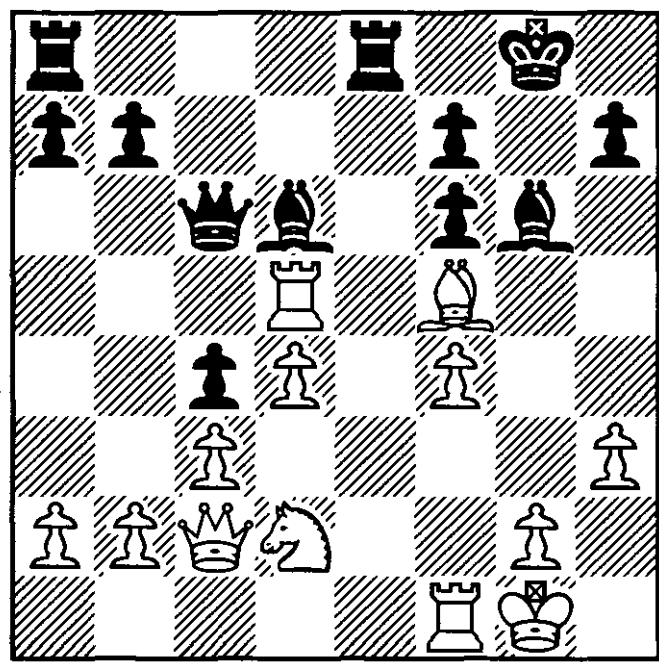
Boris: Your intuition was correct, but with this move Black sacrifices a central pawn.

Joel: Yeah, I didn't see that.

Boris: (laughing) Yes, that is your trouble. In return for this central pawn, White's rook will end up isolated on the queenside and Black will be able to use the e-file. Black should not abandon the open e-file for the semi-open g-file as you proposed. The g-file is simply not important in this position.

16...Qc7! 17 Bxf6 gxf6 18 Rxd5 Qc6

The hasty 18...Re2? would have been bad because of 19 Qd1 Rae8 20 Bg4 and White is winning.



Exercise: What does White have to do? (difficulty level 5)

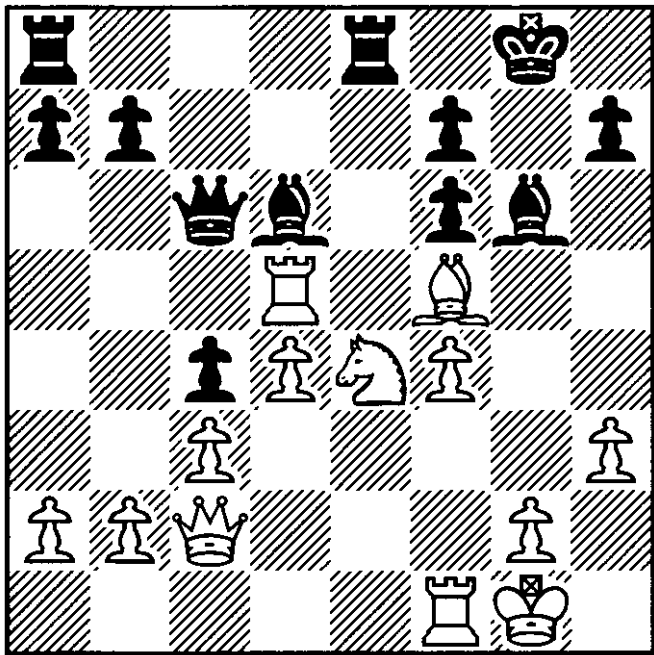
Joel: I think White has to give up the exchange with 19 Rxd6 Qxd6 20 Nxc4, when White has two pawns for the exchange. The only square he can move his rook to is a5 and here it will be out of play. I believe Black can get immediate and strong counterplay after 19 Ra5 with 19...Re2 (pinning the knight and threatening mate) 20 Rf2 Rae8 (I am not worried about 21 Rxa7 because of 21...Bxf4) and White can't exchange off rooks because of mate. Here Black's threats against White's king and the pinned knight make up for the material deficit.

Boris: You're right; the rook on a5 will be misplaced. The line you offer, 19 Rxd6 Qxd6 20 Nxc4, gave White the most chances to survive, but to struggle for the

draw (after 20...Qd5) is not in Shabalov's character. 19 Be4!? was the move I was afraid of during the game. After 19 Be4 there would arise wild complications. Now with the help of *Rybka* we can figure out that after 19...Qxd5 (19...Rxe4? 20 Nxe4 Qxd5 21 f5! was bad for Black) 20 f5 Qb5 (worse was 20...Bxf5 21 Rxf5 Qe6 22 Rh5 with a kingside attack) 21 fxg6 hxg6 22 Bxg6 Re2 23 Rxf6 Qg5, Black is better.

19 Ne4?!

Joel: Wow! I didn't anticipate this at all.



Exercise: Why is 19 Ne4 dubious? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: The move 19 Ne4 is very creative and why it is dubious escapes me. Both 19...Bxf5 20 Nxf6+ Kg7 21 Qxf5 and 19...Qxd5 20 Nxf6+ are bad for Black. Maybe 19...Rxe4 20 Qxe4 Re8 and White loses a piece.

Boris: No, White has 21 Qf3 and the rook and bishop are protected.

Joel: Right, in that case, I like 19...Bc7. This allows the queen to protect to f6-square, gets the bishop out of the way of being captured, and on c7 the bishop covers the only safe square for White's rook. Then 20 Rc5 Bxf5 21 Rxc6 Bxe4 22 Rxc7 Bxc2 and Black is better. So I would play 19...Bc7.

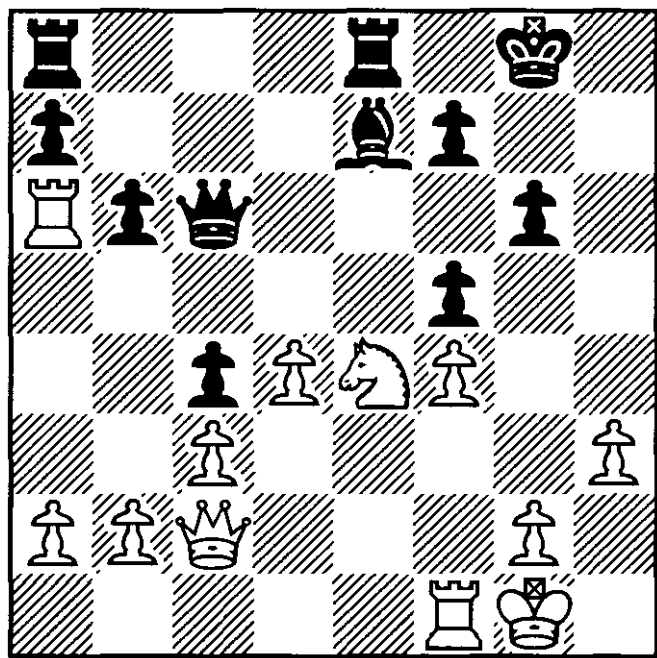
Boris: You missed 22 Qxe4 Rxe4 23 Rxc7 when White is up a pawn. 19...Bc7 would be a mistake. The only good continuation for Black was 19...Be7!, keeping control of f6. So 19 Ne4 is dubious because now White cannot sacrifice the exchange and on a5 the rook will be out of play. Anyway, it is a very useful exercise to calculate

as you did and to compare your analysis with mine or the computer.

19...Be7! 20 Ra5 b6

Boris: Much less promising for Black was 20...Bd8?! 21 Rc5 Bxf5 22 Rxc6 Bxe4 23 Re1! Bxc6 24 Rxe8+ Bxe8 25 Qf5 with an unclear position.

21 Bxg6 hxg6 22 Ra6 f5



Boris: I rejected 22...Qb7!? because of 23 f5 Qxa6 (23...g5? 24 Ra3 would have been in White's favor) 24 fxg6 with an attack for the price of the rook. Now *Rybka* can find a defense, but in a practical game it doesn't make sense to go into unnecessary complications when a clear path is in sight.

Joel: Only when you are worse do you try to complicate?

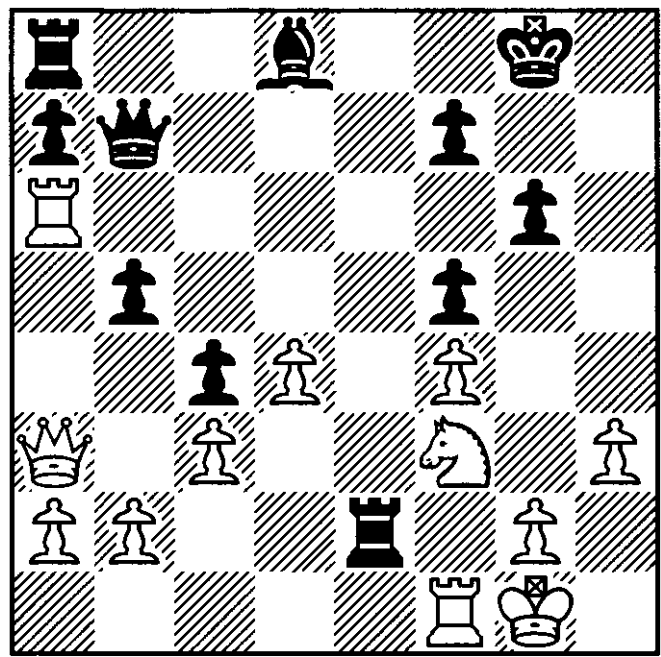
Boris: Of course. The chances of making a mistake increase the more complicated the position is.

23 Nd2!

Boris: 23 Ng5 Qb7 24 Qa4 b5 25 Qa5 would be much simpler for Black, who now has 25...Bxg5 26 fxg5 Re2 27 Rf2 Rxf2 28 Kxf2 Re8 29 Rxa7 Qe4 and wins.

23...Qb7 24 Qa4 b5 25 Qa5 Bd8 26 Qa3 Re2 27 Nf3!?

Boris: A similar position would arise after 27 Rf2 Re1+ 28 Kh2 Bh4 29 Rf1 Re2 30 Nf3 Be7, or if 28 Rf1 Rxf1+ 29 Kxf1 Bb6 30 Nf3 Qe4 with strong pressure for Black.

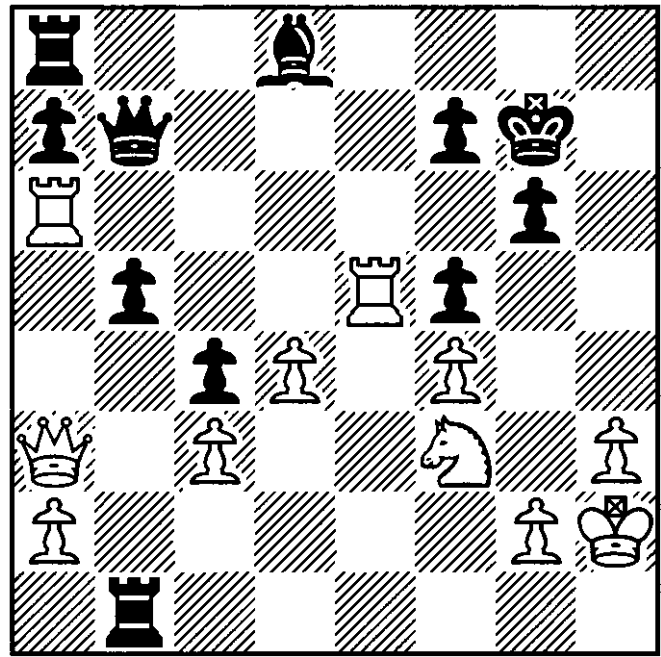


27...Be7

Boris: 27...Bb6? 28 Rf2 Rxf2 29 Kxf2 Qe4 30 g3 Re8 31 Ne5 g5 would have been too self-confident, due to 32 Rxb6! axb6 33 Qa7 and White has strong counterplay.

28 Qa5 Rxb2 29 Re1 Kg7 30 Re5 Bd8 31 Qa3 Rb1+ 32 Kh2

Boris: In exchange for his b-pawn, White has activated his pieces. Now the question becomes who will be first to create threats?



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I like 32...Bb6, locking in the rook and making it difficult for White to return his rook and queen back into the game. If White tried to get rid of the rook on b1 by 33 Re1, Black could play 33...Rxe1 34 Nxe1 Rae8, taking over the e-file.

Boris: I think both 32...Bc7? 33 Qe7 Qxa6 34 Ng5 Qf6 35 Ne6+ and your 32...Bb6 33 Re7 Qd5 34 Ng5 would give White the advantage. Black has to isolate White's queen by closing the a3-f8 diagonal, which is why I chose 32...b4!.

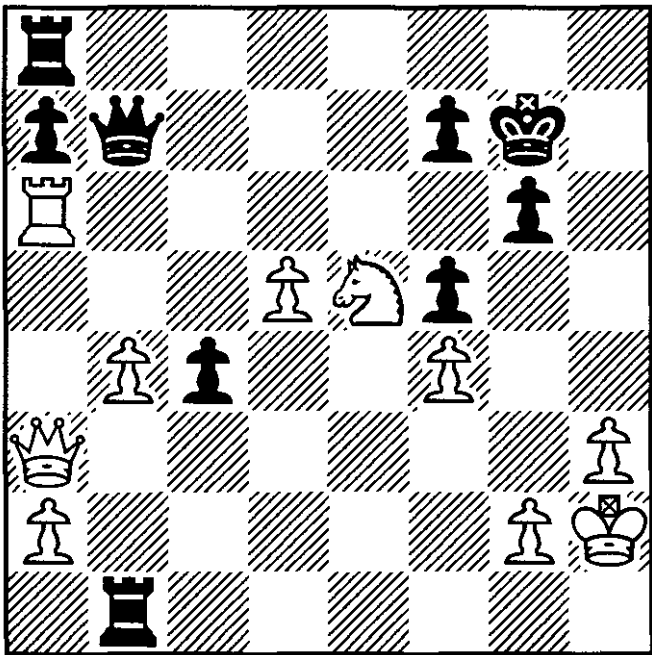
32...b4! 33 cxb4

Boris: 33 Qa4 would not have helped because of 33...Rb2! 34 d5 Bc7 35 Qd7 Qxa6 36 Ng5 Rf8 and the game will be decided by Black's attack on the g2-square.

33...Bc7 34 d5

Boris: White would lose after 34 Re2 Bxf4+ 35 g3 Bc1, when either the f3-knight or a6-rook will be hanging.

34...Bxe5 35 Nxe5



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: My instinct is to play 35...Rxb4, regaining the pawn, protecting c4, and consolidating the position. However, in this position I like 35...c3 because the queen is overloaded. If 36 Qxc3 Qxa6, when the only variation that I can think of that is interesting is 37 Ng4+, but then 37...f6 is winning.

Boris: If 35...Qxb4? 36 Qg3! or 35...Qxd5? 36 Qg3 when Black has problems defend-

ing the g6-square. In your first suggestion, 35...Rxb4 White has the strong 36 Rd6, planning Rd7 with a strong attack.

Joel: I see now that, while I chose the right move for material reasons, there is a deeper, positional idea, which I only came to when I saw your variations. The move 35...c3 blocks the queen from the g3-square thereby depriving White of any counterplay.

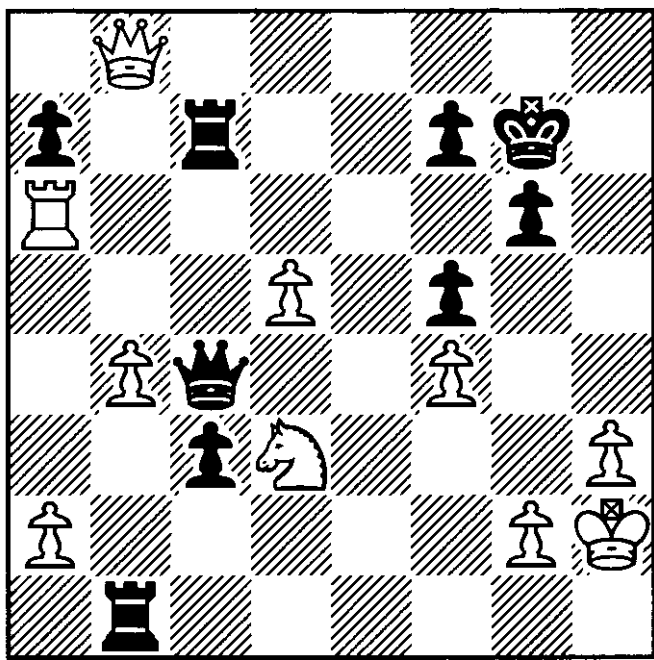
Boris: You're right, 35...c3 is best because it closes off communication for the queen.

35...c3! 36 Nd3

Boris: In the case of 36 Rc6 Qxb4 37 Qxb4 Rxb4 White would lose the endgame.

36...Rc8 37 Qa5 Qc7 38 Qb5 Qc4 39 Qb7 Qc7 40 Qxc7

Boris: For White it doesn't make sense to repeat moves, but he has one trap: 40 Qb5 Qc4 41 Qb7 Rc7 42 Qb8 and now:

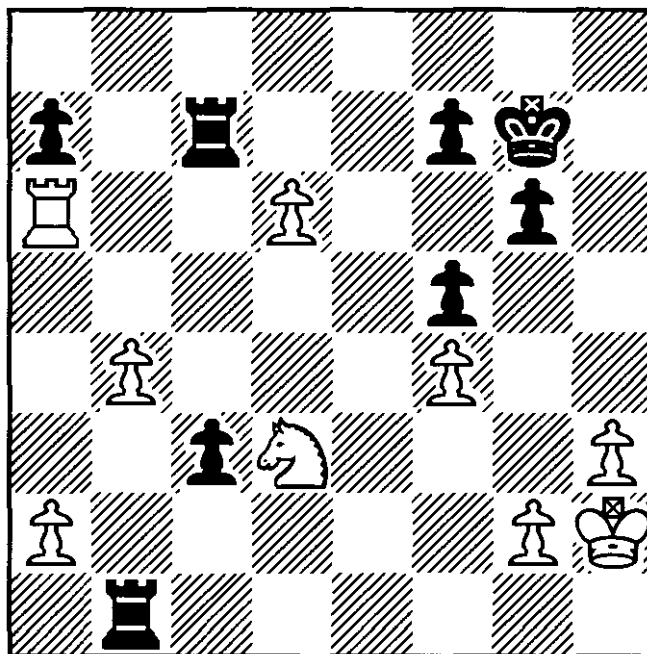


Exercise: Which piece does Black have to take? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: It seems to me that both pieces are hanging so I would start with 42...Qxd3.

Boris: Correct is 42...Qxa6 43 Qxc7 Qxd3 and Black is winning. Amusingly, after your suggestion 42...Qxd3? White has a perpetual with 43 Rxg6+! fxg6 (43...Kxg6 44 Qg8+ Kf6 45 Qd8 is a perpetual too) 44 Qxc7+ Kh6 45 Qe5! and a perpetual is inevitable.

40...Rxc7 41 d6



Exercise: Where does the black rook have to go? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: I like 41...Rc4 with the idea of bringing the rook behind the passed pawn with gain of time. If 42 Rxa7 c2 43 Ne5 c1Q 44 Rxf7+ Kg8 and Black wins.

Boris: Absolutely correct! It is important to keep the rook behind the passed pawn; that's a general rule which is important to keep in mind.

41...Rc4 42 Rxa7 c2 0-1

Joel: I think the most important lesson from this game was the use of pawn sacrifices to obstruct the coordination of the enemy pieces.

Boris: I agree. Isolating the pieces of your opponent is one of the most important methods of strategic play. The interesting variations that followed those pawn sacrifices made the positions very complicated, but Black was clearly better.

Game Eighteen
B.Gulko-V.Kupreichik
USSR Championship, Riga 1985
King's Indian Defense

Boris: This was my last championship of the Soviet Union. My opponent was one of the most dangerous attacking players in those years.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 a6 6 Be3 0-0 7 Qd2 Nc6 8 Nge2 Rb8 9 Rb1 Bd7

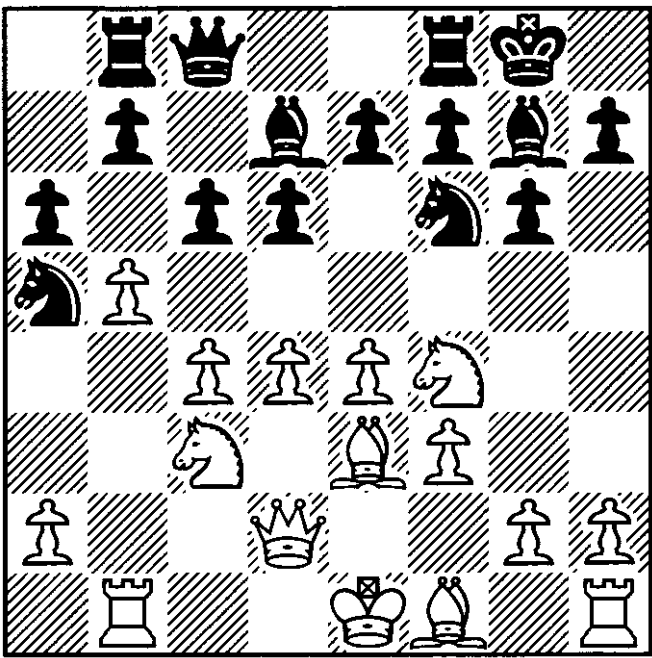
Boris: The main theoretical line is 9...b5 10 cxb5 axb5 11 b4 e5 12 d5 Ne7.

10 b4 Qc8!? 11 b5!? Na5 12 Nf4!

Boris: From f4 the knight can reach d5. The move 12 Ng3 had fewer prospects after 12...b6 (planning ...c7-c6) and the knight on g3 is misplaced.

12...c6?!

Boris: 12...b6 was not as risky as 12...c6, but White would still have a very strong position after 13 Rc1! c6 14 bxc6 Nxc6 (even worse was 14...Qxc6?! 15 Ncd5 Rfe8 16 c5! with a big advantage) 15 Nfd5.



Exercise: How to exploit the drawbacks of 12...c6 - ? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: The critical drawback in Black's position is the poorly placed knight on a5. The drawback of the move 12...c6 is that it left the knight without a retreat square. How to take advantage of this? The candidate moves I would consider would be: 13 Na4, 13 Nd5, and 13 b6:

a) 13 Na4 Nxc4 14 Bxc4 axb5 15 Bxf7+ Rxf7 16 Nb6 Qc7 17 Nxd7 Qxd7 and Black has a nice-looking queenside pawn majority.

b) 13 Nd5 cxd5 14 Qxa5 dxc4 15 bxa6 and Black can play either 15...b5 (the a6-pawn will be weak) or 15...bxa6 16 Rxb8 Qxb8 and White cannot capture either pawn because of ...Qb1+. This variation takes advantage of White's weakness; he has not completed development.

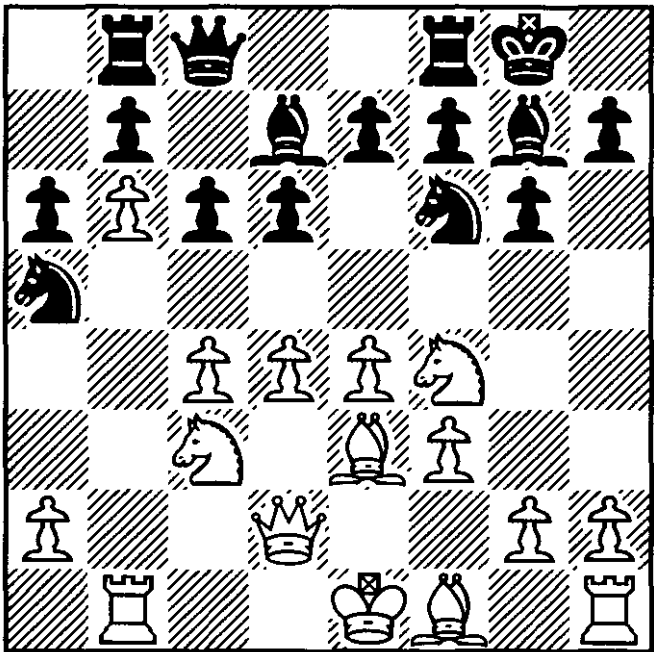
c) 13 b6 c5 14 d5 and it is hard to see how Black holds onto his knight. Therefore, I would play 13 b6.

Boris: It is very good that among the three moves you chose two of the best moves to evaluate, but your analysis has some mistakes. In the line 13 Na4 Nxc4 14 Bxc4 axb5 White can play 15 Nb6 keeping the extra piece because of 15...Qc7 16 Nxd7. So after 13 Na4 Black has to play 13...axb5 with unclear consequences. The move 13 Nd5 is really not good: after 13...cxd5 14 Qxa5 the simplest is 14...dxe4 with advantage for Black.

Joel: What did you think of my new approach?

Boris: It is very good and only this way will you improve your calculations.

13 b6!



Boris: Interesting was 13 e5!? Ne8 14 b6 dxe5! 15 dxe5 Be6 16 Ncd5! cxd5 17 cxd5 Bf5! 18 Rc1 Qd8 with an unclear position. But the move 13 b6 is more logical.

Joel: Why?

Boris: It is not in my interest to open the game when my king is still in the center.

13...e5

Boris: Another attempt to muddy the waters was 13...g5! 14 Nh3 Be6 15 Bxg5!? Nxc4 16 Bxc4 Bxc4 17 Bh6 with some advantage for White.

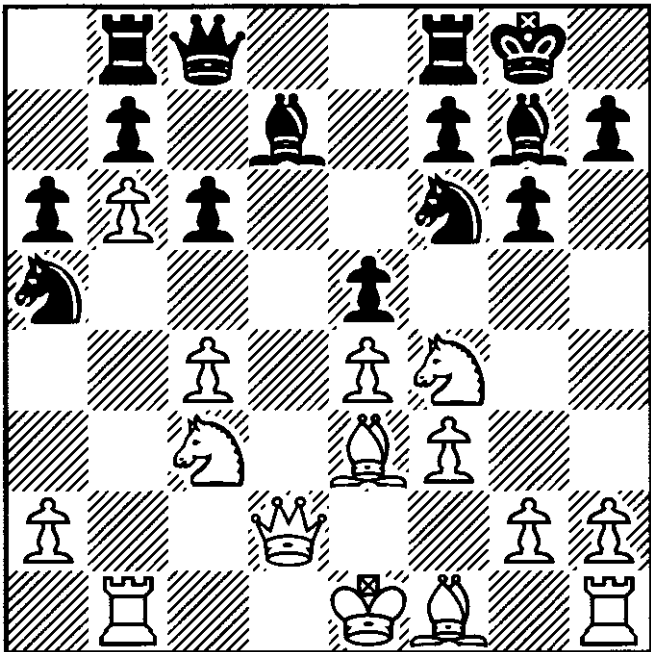
14 dxe5

Boris: Now wild complications can begin. White’s task was to find – among many opportunities leading to irrational positions – a way to a *rational* position that could be evaluated as clearly good.

Joel: What do you mean by rational versus irrational?

Boris: A rational position is one that does not require calculating a myriad of possibilities which is only possible if you are *Rybka*. The sharpest option was 14 Nd1!? exf4 15 Bxf4 Re8! 16 Nf2 (16 Qxa5 Nxe4! 17 fxe4 Rxe4+ 18 Be3 Bxd4 was also unclear) 16...d5! (after 16...Nxc4 17 Bxc4 White is better) 17 Bxb8 dxe4 18 Be5 exf3 19 Qxa5 (19 gxf3 Bf5 20 Rd1 Nd7 21 f4 f6 is unclear as well) 19...Ng4! – this is a small part of the possibilities that existed for both sides.

14...dxe5



Exercise: Find the way for White to a positional advantage. (difficulty level 5)

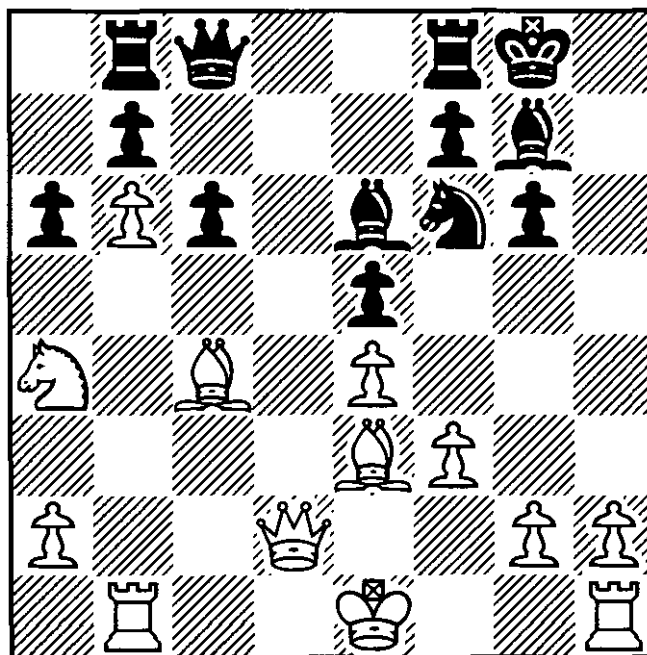
Joel: The drawbacks in Black's position are the knight on a5, the weak d6-square, Black's restricted dark-squared bishop on g7, and the light-squared bishop on d7 does not have much scope. The move I would consider in this situation would be 15 Na4; e.g. 15...exf4 16 Bxf4 Ra8 17 Qxa5 and White has won a pawn or 15...c5 16 Qxa5 exf4 (or (if 16...Bxa4 17 Qxa4 exf4 18 Bxf4) 17 Bxf4 Ra8 18 Nxc5 and White seems better in both cases.

Boris: You're right about the knight on a5, it is really a drawback. But I don't see any way for White to use the weakness of the d6-square, and the bishop on d7 has a decent diagonal. It is most interesting that you mentioned that the dark-squared bishop is restricted by the e5-pawn. This factor regarding the restriction of the g7-bishop could be considered as the key to this position. The move you offer is interesting; the drawback is that the position becomes open and White has not completed development, even though it is difficult for Black to exploit this. However, in the game White found a way to obtain a very pleasant position without giving any real counterplay to Black.

15 Nxg6!

Boris: At the time I also considered 15 Nd1 exf4 16 Bxf4 Re8 17 Nf2 (if 17 Qxa5 Nxe4! and the position again becomes wild) 17...Nxc4 18 Bxc4 Ra8 and the position is approximately equal.

15...hxg6 16 Na4 Nxc4 17 Bxc4 Be6



Exercise: What to play for White? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: The b6-pawn creates a cramping effect on Black's position, which means that exchanging on e6 is out of the question since White would like to keep as many pieces on the board as possible (this way it is more difficult for Black to maneuver). Therefore, White needs to protect the bishop on c4 and he would also like to take over of the d-file. The moves I would consider in this position would be 18 Qe2 or 18 Qc2. Both accomplish the same goals; e.g. if Black responds to 18 Qe2 with 18...Qd7 then 19 Rd1 forces her to retreat to the back rank again. However, 18 Qc2 has the added benefit of over-protecting the c5-square, which the knight or bishop will want to occupy. Therefore, I would play 18 Qc2.

Boris: Generally, your solution is correct. White's task is to prevent Black's queen from escaping from her prison on c8. Both 18 Qc2 and 18 Qe2 are the best moves, but there are some tactical errors with your analysis; e.g. if Black ever plays ...Qc8-d7 then Na4-c5 is winning.

18 Qc2 Rd8

Boris: Because Black's position is worse he had to consider ways to muddy the water, such as 18...Nd5!? 19 Bc5 (19 exd5 cxd5 20 Bd3 Qxc2 21 Bxc2 d4 22 Bg5 Bxa2 was not so clear either) 19...Re8 (19...Nf4 20 Bxf8 does not give Black enough compensation for the exchange) 20 exd5 cxd5 21 Bd3 Qc6 22 0-0 Rbc8 and White has to be vigilant.

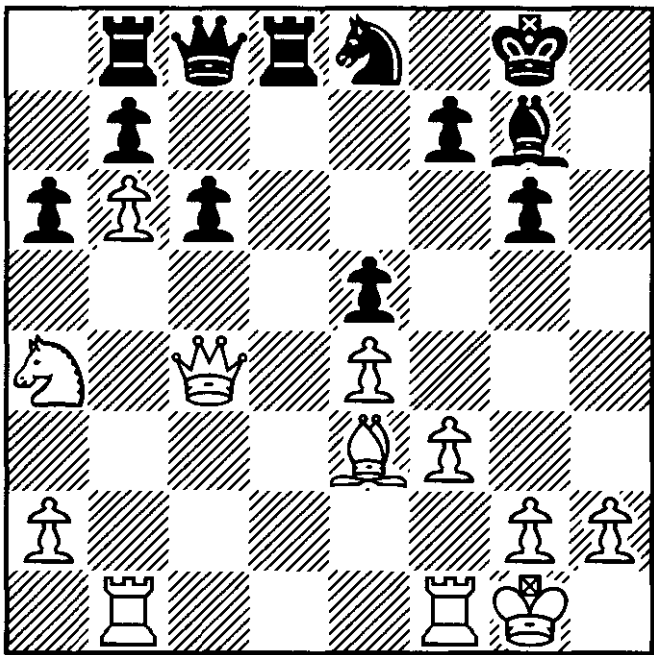
19 0-0 Bxc4

Boris: Now if 19...Nd5 20 exd5 cxd5 21 Bb3 Qxc2 22 Bxc2 d4, there is 23 Bg5 f6 24 Bd2 and Black's compensation for the piece would be insufficient. Practically speaking, when the game develops in an unfavorable direction for you, sacrifices in order to change the character of the position often make sense. Boris Spassky was a specialist in this regard.

Joel: Can you give an example or a specific game in which he used this technique to good effect?

Boris: There are many great games, but Y.Averbakh-B.Spassky, USSR Championship (playoff), Leningrad 1956, stands out as one of the best.

20 Qxc4 Ne8!



Exercise: What is the best way for White? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Black's position is cramped and the dark-squared bishop is restricted. The d-file is open and Black currently occupies it. Black's queen and queen's rook have very few moves, so allowing exchanges with something like 21 Rfd1 doesn't seem right. Black intends to play 21...Nd6, although I don't see what he will gain from this just yet. The candidate moves I would consider would be 21 Nc5 and 21 Bg5:

a) 21 Bg5 comes with gain of time but seems to help Black untangle himself. For example, 21...Rd6 22 Be7 Rd7 and now White cannot play 23 Nc5 because the bishop hangs, so he has to play 23 Bc5 but then Black can begin to untangle himself. In addition, the a4-knight is deprived of its best square.

b) 21 Nc5 seems strong. I remember reading in Dvoretsky and Yusupov's *Positional Play* that if time is not of the essence then improving your worst placed piece is probably the best move, or at least you cannot go wrong with such a move. Here, the knight on a4 is on the rim and is begging to go to c5 (talk to your pieces, right?).

Boris: There are some small inaccuracies in your analysis. After 21 Bg5 Black has 21...Rd4 and Black will win time to improve the position of his pieces. Among your candidate moves, 21 Nc5 was really the best, but in the game continuation White uses a very important method, which Korchnoi used against me on his 13th move in Game Sixteen. In this particular case, we know Black is going to play ...Ne8-d6 with gain of time. Therefore, anticipating this, White first hides the queen and

then uses the drawbacks of Black’s maneuver to his advantage. Playing more than once with Karpov, I found that this method of thinking was typical for him.

Joel: Yes, I remember a wonderful example of this in *Positional Play*, where in a crushing position Karpov still took time out to prevent Black’s counterplay (A.Karpov-J.Timman, Montreal 1979) and Dvoretsky writes (p.69): “Excuse me, but what idea can Black still have?”

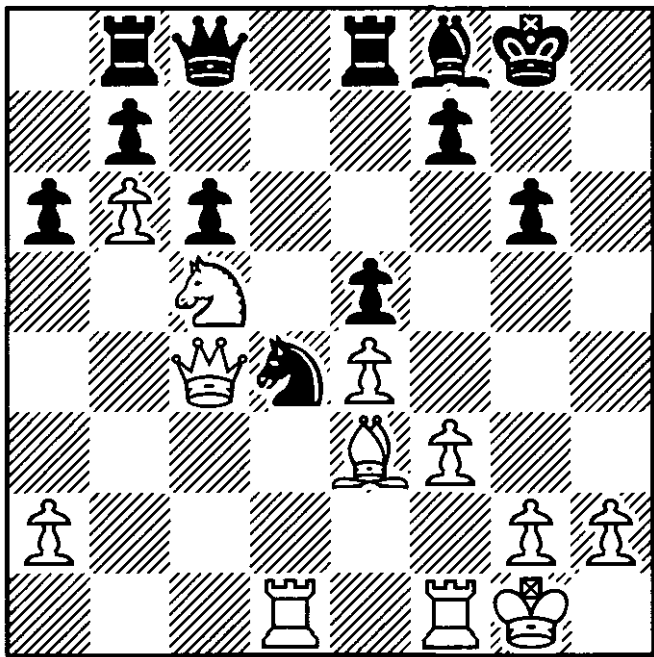
21 Qb3!

Boris: The simple 21 Rbd1 was worse than the move in the game, as after 21...Nd6 22 Qb3 Nb5 Black would have reasonable counter chances.

21...Nd6 22 Bg5! Re8 23 Rbd1!

Boris: White has to allow Black to stick his knight on d4. If he tries to prevent it with 23 Nc3, then 23...Qe6! would release Black from his problems.

23...Nb5 24 Nc5 Nd4 25 Qc4 Bf8! 26 Be3!



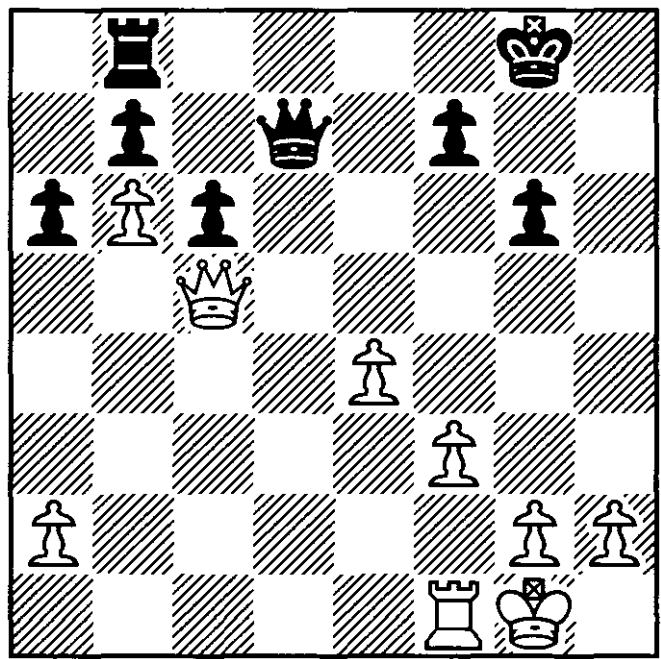
26...Rd8!

Boris: Because of White’s maneuver on moves 21-23, White controls the d-file and Black’s knight cannot survive on d4 for long. Insisting on keeping the knight on d4 with 26...Bg7 would immediately give White a decisive advantage with 27 f4; and 26...Ne6 27 Nd7 was also bad. By sacrificing a pawn with 26...Rd8! Black plays more stubbornly.

27 Bxd4 exd4 28 Rxd4 Rxd4 29 Qxd4 Bxc5!

Boris: Again the best defense. After 29...Qd8 30 Qxd8! (worse was 30 Nd7 Bc5!) 30...Rxd8 31 Nxb7 Rb8 32 Na5 Rxb6 33 Nc4 Black's position would be hopeless.

30 Qxc5 Qd7



31 f4!

Boris: With this move White combines using his extra pawn and the necessity of including his rook in the game. Inferior was 31 h4?! Rd8 32 h5 (32 Qg5!? Qd4+ 33 Kh2 Qxb6 34 h5 Rd6 35 e5 Qd8! was not dangerous for Black either) 32...gxh5 (the rook endgame after 32...Qd4+ 33 Qxd4 Rxd4 34 hxg6 fxg6 35 Rb1 is bad for Black) 33 Qxh5 Qd4+ 34 Kh2 Qxb6 35 f4 Qb5! and Black can survive because White's rook on f1 is hanging.

31...Rd8 32 f5 gxf5!

Boris: Rightly avoiding 32...Qd4+ 33 Qxd4 Rxd4 34 fxg6 fxg6 35 e5 Re4 36 Rd1! and White wins the b7-pawn and the game.

33 Qxf5 Qxf5 34 exf5 Rd5!

Boris: Worse for Black was 34...Rd2 35 a4 Ra2 36 Rd1 and again White wins the b7-pawn. After the text a very interesting rook endgame arises. Because of his active rook, Black regains the pawn he sacrificed on move 26. But in the time Black needs to regain this pawn, White creates dangerous threats.

35 g4 Rb5 36 Rd1 Rxb6 37 Kf2 Rb2+?!

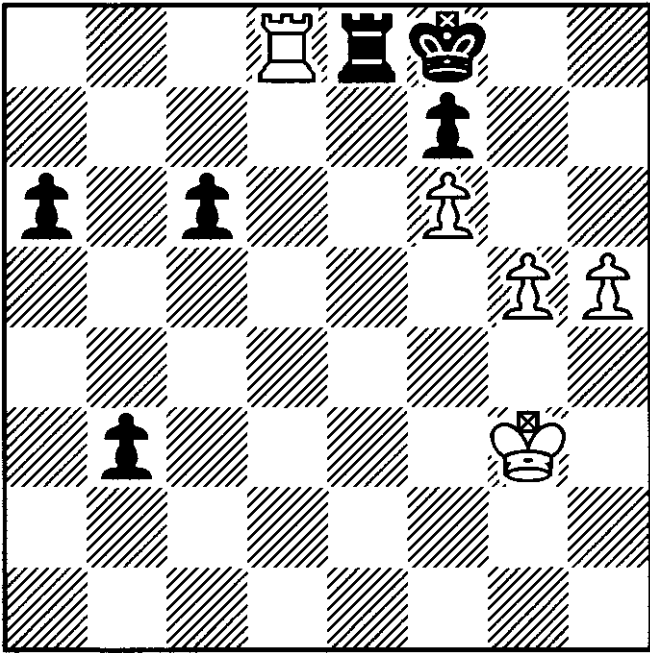
Boris: 37...c5!? was perhaps better, but it was probably not enough after 38 Rd7.

38 Kg3 Rxa2 39 Rd8+ Kg7 40 Rd7 b5

Boris: Giving up the b-pawn wouldn't have saved the game either: 40...Kf6 41 Rxb7 a5 (or 41...c5 42 Rc7) 42 Rc7 Rc2 43 Ra7 Rc5 44 Kh4 and White is winning.

41 g5 Kg8

Boris: An alternative was 41...Kf8 42 f6 Re2 43 h4 b4 44 h5 b3 45 Rd8+ (45 g6 would win as well) 45...Re8 and then:



Exercise: What does White play? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: Black is a pawn up and has a passed pawn on b3 that is difficult to contend with. However, his king is vulnerable on the back rank so White should look for ways to take advantage of this weakness. The moves I considered were: 46 Rxe8+ and 46 h6:

a) 46 Rxe8+ Kxe8 47 g6 and now there are two possibilities:

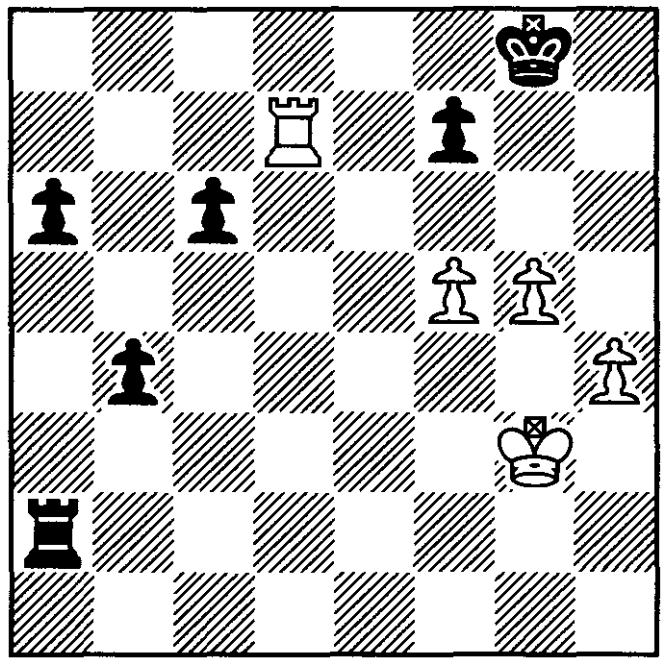
a1) 47...b2 48 g7 b1Q 49 g8Q+ Kd7 50 Qxf7 and White is winning.

a2) 47...fxg6 48 h6! Kf7 (if 48...b2 then 49 h7 b1Q 50 h8Q+ Kd7 51 Qg7+) 49 h7 b2 50 h8Q b1Q 51 Qg7+ Ke6 52 Qe7+ followed by f6-f7 and White is better because he has the further advanced pawn in a queen ending.

b) 46 h6 Rxd8 47 h7 Rd3+ 48 Kg4 Rd4+ and if White plays 49 Kh5 then 49...Rd1 saves the game, or if the white king tries to approach the rook he will get behind the h-pawn.

Boris: The analysis you made was useful for you, and White keeps an edge in the lines you analyzed with 46 Rxe8+, but you miscalculated the 46 h6! variation. After 48 ...Rd4+ 49 Kh5! Black doesn't have 49...Rd1 because 50 h8Q is checkmate (you forgot that the black king was on f8). Nevertheless, in trying to solve these positions, you improve your ability to calculate.

42 h4 b4



Exercise: Find the best way for White. (difficulty level 5)

Joel: I would play 43 Kg4. I can't find anything wrong with this move and White will have to play it anyway to create mate threats against Black's king (e.g. Kg4-h5).

Boris: The position is very sharp. Black has an extra pawn and three connected passed pawns. Although White's pawns are more dangerous, it is necessary to play actively. Playing with the king loses important time and, to win, White would have to find a narrow, study-like path which would not be easy if you are not *Rybka*. For example: 43 Kg4 a5 44 Kh5 Re2 45 Kh6 Re8 46 g6 Rf8! 47 f6! b3 48 Re7!! a4 (or 48...b2 49 Rb7 a4 50 Rxb2 a3 51 Rb7 Ra8 52 Rxf7 a2 53 Rg7+ Kf8 54 Kh7 and White wins) 49 gxf7+ Rxf7 50 Kg6!! Rxf6+ 51 Kxf6 b2 52 Rg7+! Kh8 53 Rb7 a3 54 Kg6 and Black cannot prevent mate.

The move White played also did not miss the win but made it more difficult. The shortest and simplest way to win was 43 Rd8+! Kg7 (Black doesn't have 43...Kh7

Lessons with a Grandmaster

because of 44 g6+ fxg6 45 f6 and the pawn is unstoppable) 44 h5 and Black can resign.

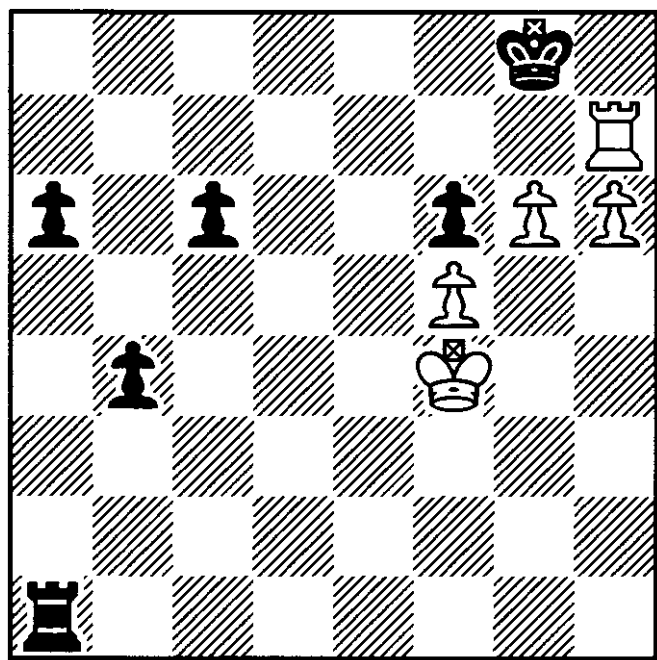
43 h5 Ra1! 44 Rd8+ Kh7! 45 Kf4

Boris: Now 45 g6+? doesn't win. After 45...fxg6 46 hxg6+ Kg7 47 Rd7+ Kf6 the position is a draw.

45...f6! 46 g6+ Kh6 47 Rh8+

Boris: Simpler was 47 Rd7 Rf1+ 48 Ke3 Rg1 49 Rh7+ Kg5 50 g7 Kxf5 51 h6 b3 52 Rh8 b2 53 Rb8 and White is winning.

47...Kg7 48 Rh7+ Kg8 49 h6



49...Rh1

Boris: Black could have tried 49...Rf1+, but after 50 Kg4 Rg1+ 51 Kf3 Rf1+ 52 Ke2 Rxf5 53 Rf7 Re5+ 54 Kd3 Re8 55 h7+ Kh8 56 g7+ Kxh7 57 Rf8 White's last pawn brings him victory.

50 Rg7+ Kh8 51 Rh7+ Kg8 52 Rg7+ Kh8 53 Rf7 Rh4+ 54 Kf3 Rxh6 55 Rxf6 Rh1 56 Rf8+ Kg7 57 Rf7+ Kg8 58 Rb7 a5 59 Kf4 c5 60 f6 1-0

Joel: As with all the games, accurate calculation is required. I messed up several continuations with faulty analysis, but I am pleased with the systematic way I am going about analyzing positions now. Having seen several of your games, one

thing I notice is that, instead of getting concerned with Black's threats (far advanced queenside passed pawns), you are always looking for ways to create threats using your own trumps; e.g. creating mate threats against Black's vulnerable king.

There was also something interesting I noticed. When Black initiated his ...Nd6-b5-d4 maneuver with the move 20...Ne8 I did not see beyond his intended ...Nd6 until I began calculating variations. Only after I began calculating variations did I realize his plan, which compelled me to go back and evaluate the position once more.

Boris: For me the most interesting moments in this game were how White found a way to transform a completely irrational position into a strategic position with a clear advantage. I recommend that you take note of White's 21st move, playing against your opponent's anticipated next move. On move 31, White found the correct plan in a complicated queen and rook endgame: to use his extra pawn and include his rook in the game. It was also a very interesting rook endgame, where White exchanged two pawns on the queenside for extra tempi in order to create decisive threats on the kingside.

Game Nineteen
V.Hort-B.Gulko
Niksic 1978
English Opening

Boris: This was the only significant international tournament I played abroad in my days as a Soviet player.

Joel: This was because you were not allowed to play, right?

Boris: Yes, and after I became a refusnik (applied for emigration) in 1979, I was not allowed to travel abroad at all for seven years. In 1978, however, I was the USSR Champion and the authorities allowed me to travel to this tournament in Yugoslavia. It was a successful tournament for me. I tied for first with Jan Timman. Many of the best players in the world were there. It was what they would now call a super-tournament.

Joel: Who else played?

Boris: Portisch, Ljubojevic, Andersson, Vaganian, these were the top players in those years. Hort was one of the best as well. I was the leader and he did his best to play a complicated game to catch up to me.

1 c4 c5 2 Nc3 g6 3 g3 Bg7 4 Bg2 Nc6 5 b3 e6 6 Bb2 Nge7 7 Qc1!?

Boris: More challenging than 7 Na4, which was played in V.Smyslov-M.Tal, Moscow 1964. After 7...Bxb2 8 Nxb2 O-O 9 e3 d5 Black achieved a good game.

7...d6 8 f4!

A new and very interesting plan in this position. White hopes to exchange dark-squared bishops and create threats on the a1-h8 diagonal. Smyslov tried 8 h4 against Ivkov (Palma de Mallorca 1967), but without much success.

8...O-O 9 Ne4 e5 10 fxe5 Nxe5 11 Nf3 f5 12 Nf2 N7c6 13 Nxe5 dxe5!?

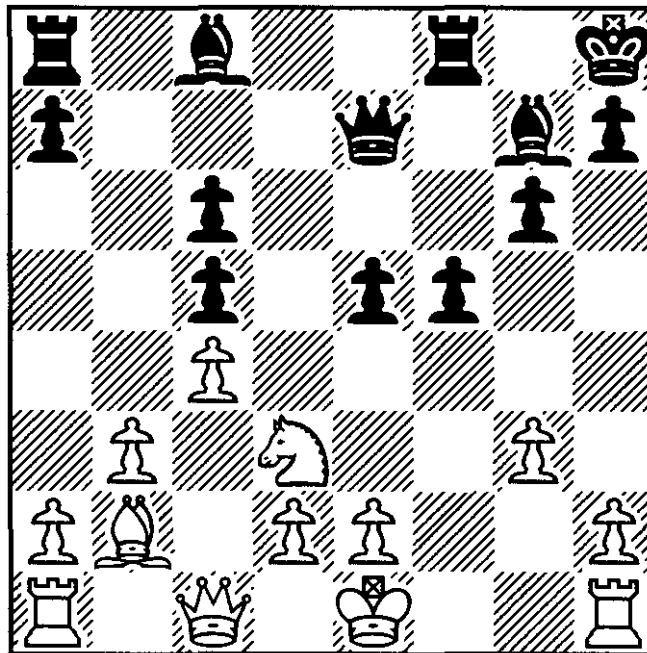
Boris: The move I played is sharp. I agree to have a lot of weak pawns but hope to have a dynamic advantage instead. A quiet approach would have been 13...Nxe5 14 Nh3 with the idea of bringing the knight to d5 via f4, which Black cannot prevent (14...g5? 15 Bd5+ Kh8 16 d4! cxd4 17 Qxg5 is good for White). If I had played 13...Nxe5, the game would become a quiet, maneuvering struggle, which was

more in Hort's style.

Joel: So you are trying to unbalance your opponent both in terms of chess and psychology.

Boris: Yes, but I also preferred sharper chess than Hort and enjoyed complicated positions.

14 Bd5+ Kh8 15 Bxc6! bxc6 16 Nd3 Qe7



17 Qc3?!

Boris: Because White did not take the black e-pawn on move 19, the move 17 Qc3 looks like a waste of time. Instead, 17 Ba3 Rd8 18 Bxc5 Qe8 would give Black excellent compensation for the pawn.

Joel: How so?

Boris: I have active pawns, White's pieces are misplaced, I have two bishops and am threatening to play, after 19 O-O for instance, 19...e4 20 Nf4 Qe5 winning the exchange. If White defends against this threat with 19 Rb1, Black would develop the initiative by playing 19...f4.

It was probably better for White to play 17 Bc3!?, trying to create pressure on e5, though after 17...f4! 18 Qb2 f3! the e5-pawn is untouchable because of 19 Bxe5? f2+.

17...a5!

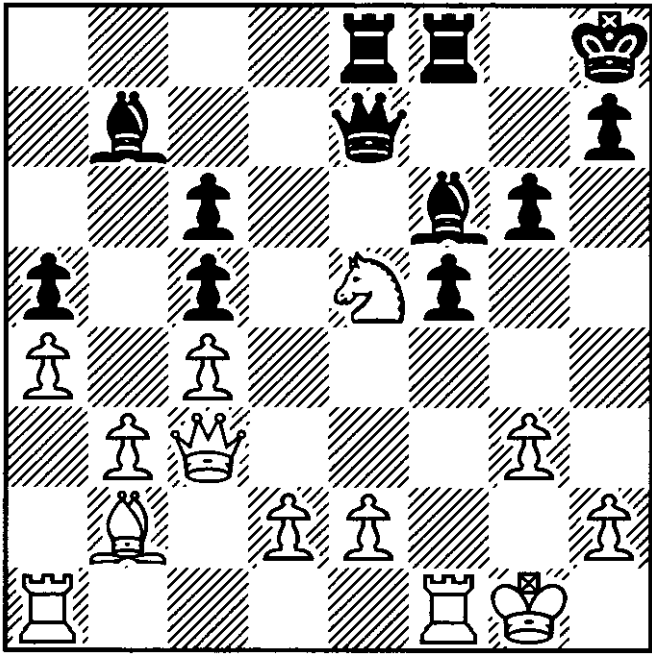
Boris: Preventing White's positional threat of Qc3-a5.

18 a4?!

Boris: 18 O-O was safer.

18...Bf6! 19 Qc2?!

Boris: White recognized that 17 Qc3 was inaccurate. During the game, I thought that 19 Nxe5!? was bad because of 19...Bb7 20 O-O Rae8?, but then:

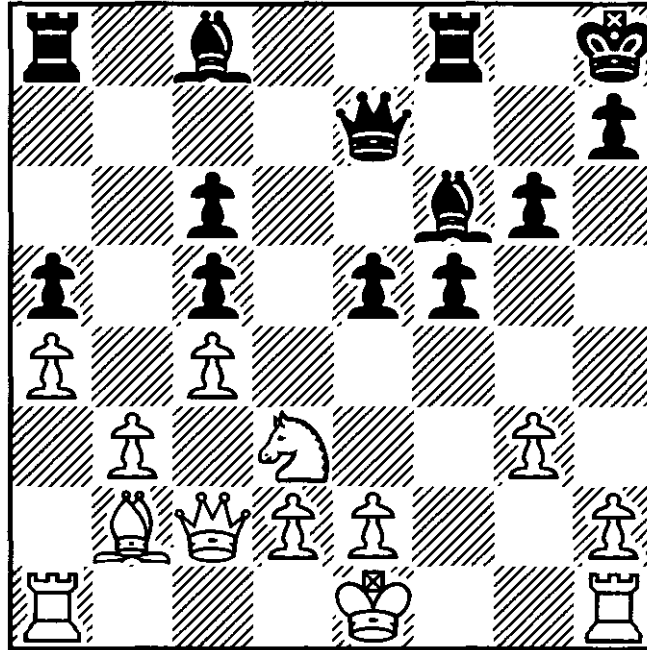


Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 2)

Boris: White has 21 Ng4!!, and after 21...Bxc3 22 Bxc3+ Black has to return the queen with 22...Qg7, since 22...Kg8?? 23 Nh6 is mate.

Therefore, Black should continue with 20...Kg8 21 e3 Rae8 22 d4 cxd4 23 exd4 c5 24 Rae1 cxd4 25 Qxd4 Qc7 with a very strong attack. The computer found a better defense for White in 21 Rf3! Rae8 22 Re3 Qc7 or 21 Qe3 Rae8, but Black still has a good game.

Returning to the game:



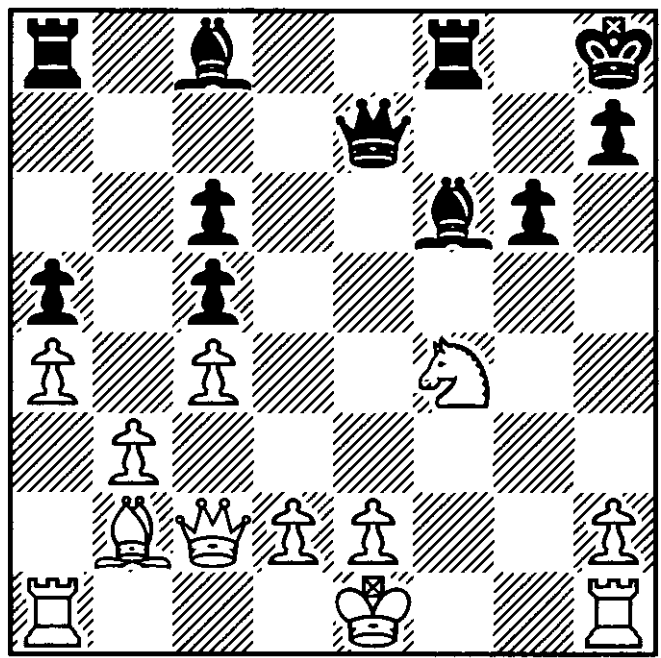
Exercise: Black has to take care of his bishops. How? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: The drawback of White's position is that the king is still in the center; therefore, opening up the game would favor Black. Also, the drawback to White's last move is that he has telegraphed that he intends to castle queenside, which makes sense. Therefore, I am thinking about the move 19...f4! but after 20 gxf4 I am having trouble calculating how Black should proceed. I decided on 20...e4 with the idea of keeping the white king in the center after 21 Nf2 e3 22 dxe3 Qxe3 23 Bxf6+ Rxf6. I was not afraid of the continuation 24 Qb2 (pinning the rook) because the g4-square is covered by the bishop, which prevents Nf2-g4.

Boris: Black has to activate his bishops, but playing 20...e4 would be a terrible positional mistake because the bishop on c8 would be horribly restricted. Black's main task is to find a role for his light-squared bishop because it is unopposed. I think the psychology of your mistake is that you did not put a white pawn on f4 (after 20 gxf4) in your mind and instead had the white pawn on g3 as it was in the initial position. Because you didn't update the image in your mind when you started calculating later moves, you missed 21 Ne5 in response to 20...e4. This can only be corrected by training in calculations.

19...f4! 20 gxf4 exf4 21 Bxf6+

Boris: Another possibility was 21 Nxf4, and then:



Exercise: What should Black do? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: White's king is still stuck in the center and the drawback of this move is that it exposes White's queen to attack. Therefore, I would play 21...Bf5. If 22 Bxf6+? Qxf6 and the knight and rook are hanging, and 22 Nd3 Bxd3 wins since White cannot recapture with the e-pawn (because of the pin) or with the queen (because the bishop on b2 is hanging). If 22 d3 then maybe the simple 22...Bd4 gives Black the advantage because the knight is hanging and the e-pawn is backward.

Boris: There are several flaws in your technique of calculation. You have to be more organized in figuring out what the candidate moves are and then consider them one at a time. Also, the same problem occurred as in your previous analysis. You did not update the image in your mind. The move 21...Bf5 closed the f-file, and therefore, the knight on f4 is not hanging. To get rid of these flaws, it might be good to try to analyze positions blindfold or even play blindfold games. This will train you in the visualization of your pieces as you calculate variations.

Joel: How can I do that?

Boris: Take diagrams and analyze them blindfold. This will improve your ability to manipulate pieces in your mind.

Joel: How do you play blindfold chess?

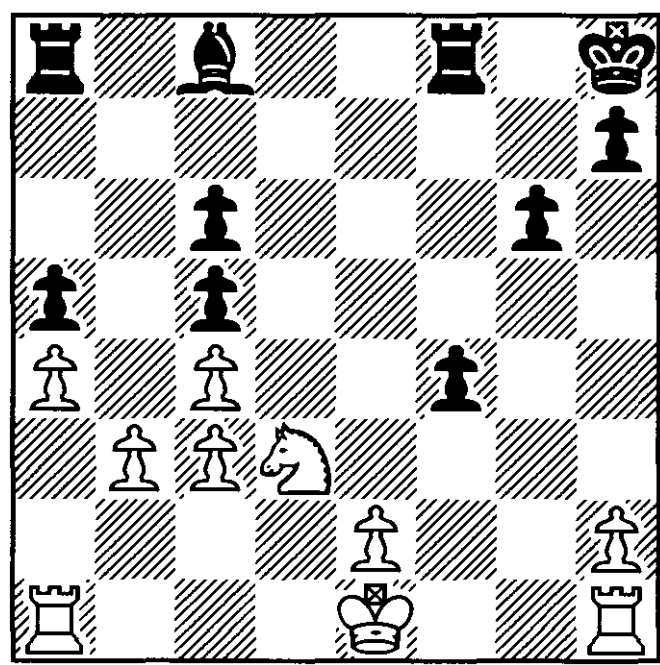
Boris: With your friend walking through the park.

Joel: Do you write the moves down?

Boris: You can but it is not necessary. Interestingly, many strong players – Ivanchuk, Shirov, Gelfand, Svidler, and among American players, Alexander Ivanov – don’t look at the board when they calculate. They look to the side or at the ceiling.

Here the correct move is 21...Bd4!. Your analysis shows that you have a feeling for the position and found the correct way but inserted unnecessary moves. You found the move 22...Bd4 (against 22 d3) but you had to play this right away, keeping the f-file open, which would give Black a tremendous attack. Whereas after 21...Bf5 White has 22 Bxf6+ Qxf6 23 Qc3 equalizing.

21...Qxf6 22 Qc3 Qxc3 23 dxc3



Exercise: What should Black do? (difficulty level 2)

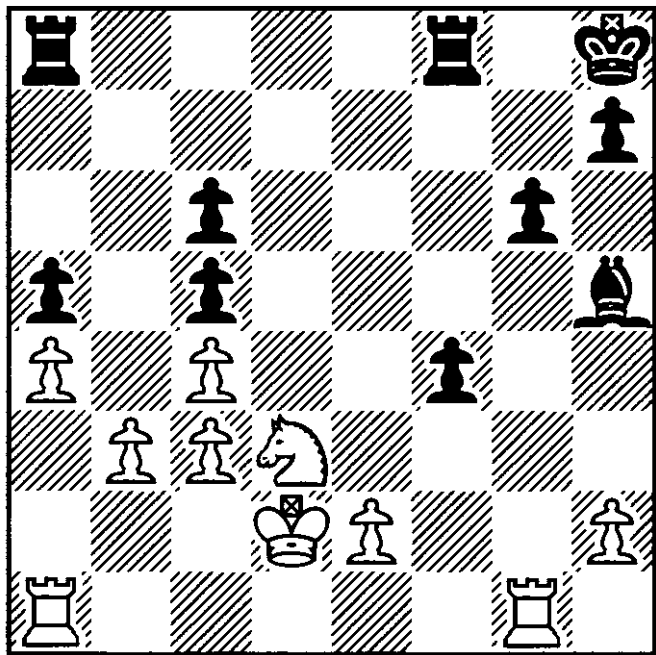
Joel: I would play 23...f3 with the idea of opening up the position against the king, and to take advantage of having the bishop versus the knight and better coordinated rooks (right now White’s rooks are not connected). If White replies 24 exf3 then 24...Rxf3 attacks the knight, the pawn on c3 (as well as b3), sets up ...Bc8-g4, and ...Rae8 or ...Rad8. If White does not take and instead plays 24 O-O then 24...Bf5 attacks the knight and prepares ...fxe2. If 24 e3 then Black has a passed pawn on the third rank and White a weak e3-pawn.

Boris: Here is the same problem. When you calculate you don’t see the position that arises after a few moves. After 23...f3 you calculated 24 O-O Bf5, but White has the simple 25 Rxf3 and Black cannot recapture on f3 because the bishop on f5 has

closed the f-file. Returning to the diagram, Black has to figure out the right target to attack and it has to be the e2-pawn, so 23...Bg4 is the strongest move.

23...Bg4! 24 Rg1 Bh5 25 Kd2

Boris: If White played 25 Nxc5 Black's attack on the e2-pawn would be successful: 25...Rae8 26 Rg2 (or 26 Ra2 Bxe2! 27 Rxe2 f3! 28 Ne6 Rf6 with advantage) 26...f3 27 Rf2 Rxe2+ 28 Rxe2 fxe2 29 Kd2 Rd8+ 30 Nd3 g5! (threatening ...Bg6) and White is in trouble.



Exercise: How does Black develop the initiative? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: Again, I like the move 25...f3. With the king stuck in the center of the board I want to open the game up.

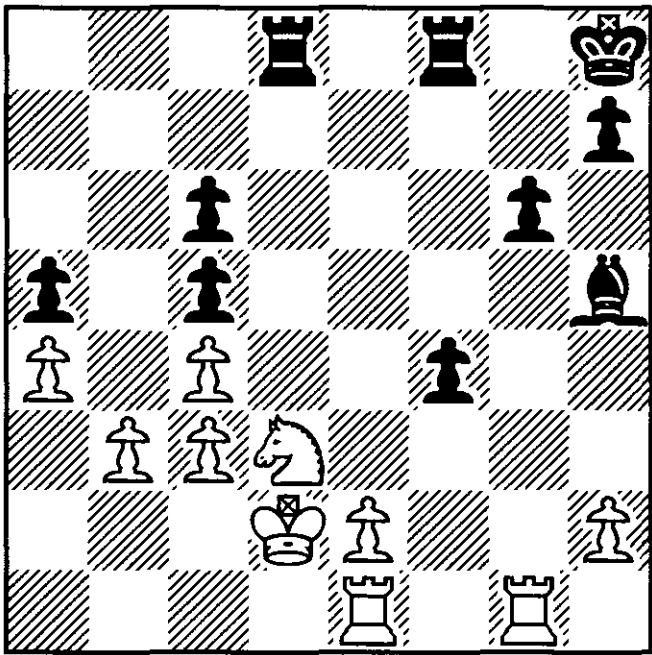
Boris: Again, in this position Black has to figure out the main weakness in White's position. Now it is not the e2-pawn but the knight on d3 that is protected by the e2-pawn.

Joel: Why is the e2-pawn not the main weakness anymore?

Boris: Because now it can be easily defended.

25...Rad8! 26 Rae1

Boris: In the case of 26 Raf1 Black would demonstrate that the d3-knight is under-protected by playing 26...Bxe2! 27 Kxe2 Rfe8+ 28 Kd2 Re3 winning.



Exercise: How does Black proceed? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I seem to be stuck on the move ...f4-f3 but here I think it is really strong. After 26...f3 how can White respond? If 27 e3 then 27...f2 wins. If 27 exf3 then 27...Rxf3 threatens the knight, and either 28 Rg3 or 28 Re3 seems to lose to me because of 28...Rf2+ winning the h-pawn.

Boris: Your variation is almost correct, except that after 28 Rg3? Black has 28...Rxd3+ winning.

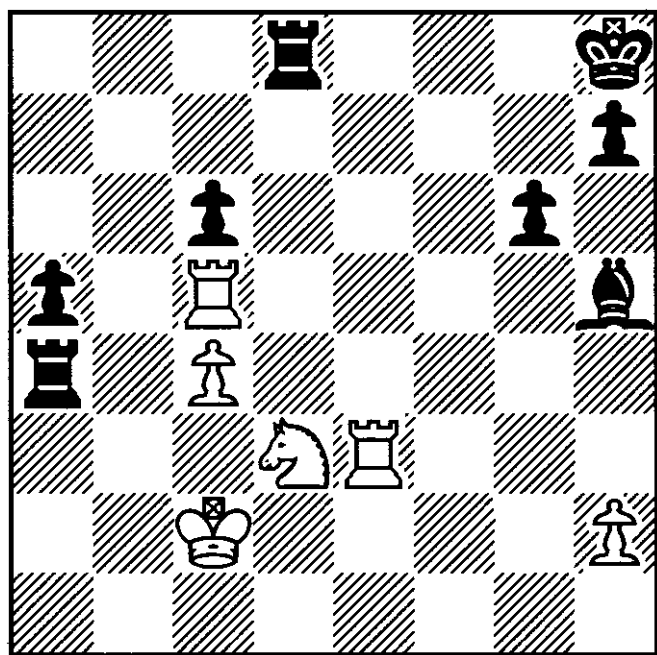
26...f3! 27 exf3 Rxf3 28 Re3 Rf2+ 29 Ke1

Boris: For a long time White defended with the best moves. After 29 Kc1 Rxh2 30 Nxc5 Rdd2 31 Re7 Rb2! Black would win quickly.

29...Rc2 30 Rg5 Rxc3 31 Kd2 Rxb3 32 Kc2 Ra3 33 Rge5!

Boris: Again, White's only move. If 33 Rxc5 g5! and White would not have a defense against 34...Bg6.

33...Rxa4 34 Rxc5



Exercise: What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: The bishop on h5 does not seem to be playing a very important role, whereas Black’s rooks appear to be well placed. I think improving the placement of Black’s worst placed piece is a top priority. Therefore, I like the move 34...Bg4, threatening ...Bf5.

Boris: 34...Bg4 is not the best move because it allows White to activate his pieces with 35 Ne5. Instead, 34...Ra2+ 35 Kb3 Re2 36 Rg3 Rb8+ was clearly winning.

However, at this moment in the game, my opponent, who defended for a long time finding “only” moves, had a severe time shortage – and this, as often happens in such situations, caused Black to blunder.

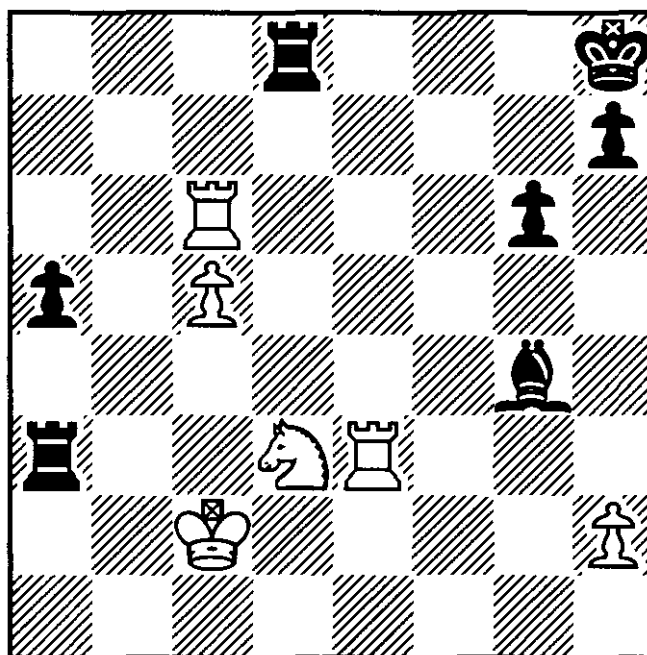
Joel: Can you say why, if your opponent is short of time, it brought *you* to blunder? Why do you think this often happens?

Boris: Chess players will very often play quickly in their opponent’s time trouble. My advice is that when your opponent is in time trouble and you have the advantage, do not try to use the time trouble! Play as before, or even more slowly.

34...Ra3?! 35 Rxc6 Bg4?

Boris: 35...Ra2+ 36 Kb3 Re2 or 36...Rxh2 was still an easy win.

36 c5!



36...Ra4

Boris: After overlooking 36 c5, Black turned to another strategy against opponents that are in time trouble, i.e. playing sudden or unexpected moves – but Black didn't need to do this. The conservative 36...Bf5! 37 Rd6 Rc8 38 c6 a4 would win without problems. It looks like it was more important for Black to exploit White's time shortage than to win the game.

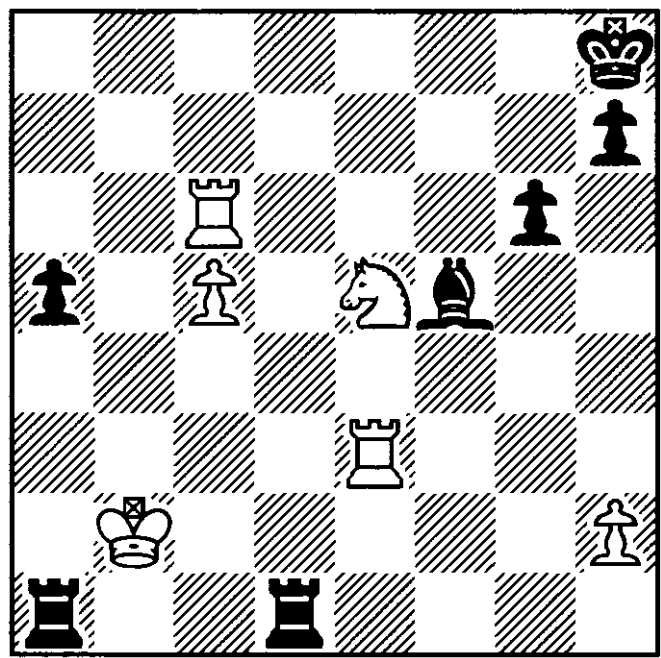
37 Ne5?

Boris: White didn't find 37 Rd6! Rxd6 38 cxd6 Rd4 39 Ne5 Bf5+ 40 Kc3 Rd1 41 Kc4 Kg7 42 Kc5 Kf6 43 Kc6 and it is doubtful that Black can win here.

37...Bf5+ 38 Kc1

Boris: 38 Kb3 Rb4+ 39 Kc3 Rd1 40 Nd3 did not help because of 40...Ra4! 41 Rd6 Kg7 42 c6 Ra3+ 43 Kc4 Rd2 and Black wins.

38...Ra1+ 39 Kb2 Rdd1



40 Nf7+?

Boris: White’s last time-trouble mistake, but his position was again hopeless: 40 Nc4 Rab1+ 41 Kc3 a4 42 Rb6 Rbc1+ 43 Kb4 Rc2 44 Nd6 Rd4+ 45 Ka3 (or 45 Kb5 Bd7+ 46 Ka6 Rxc5 47 Rb8+ Kg7 48 Re7+ Kf6 49 Rxd7 Rc6+ 50 Rb6 Rxb6+ 51 Kxb6 Ke6) 45...Rxc5 46 Rb7 Rd3+ 47 Rxd3 Bxd3 and Black is winning.

40...Kg7 41 Rc7 Rdb1+ 42 Kc3 0-1

Joel: What you have pointed out is that not only are my calculations weak but there are specific problems about how I calculate, including that my calculations are not well organized (I have to analyze one candidate move at a time) and I often fail to update the image in my mind, leading to erroneous calculations. I imagine this is a problem with most players my level and may be the single most important area in which to improve. I think you were able to detect this because I am taking more seriously the suggestion to train in calculations, so I tried harder to calculate these variations, which immediately brought to light these problems. I hope others reading this book will take your advice.

Boris: I agree with you in your estimation of your problems. What I can say about the game is that it was an interesting conflict between weak pawns and active pieces. In the game, Black followed Josif Dorfman’s excellent advice to play extremely aggressively in positions where you have pawn weaknesses. In this case, the weaknesses in your position can become advantages (e.g. doubled pawns pro-

vide extra open files).

Joel: Would you say my problem is a general one for others my playing strength?

Boris: No. Others have their own problems. They may be the same but also very different. For example, they may calculate more accurately than you, but cannot evaluate positions correctly. You often find the right moves because of your feel for the position but your calculations are off. Chess is rich enough for players to have weaknesses in many different areas.

Game Twenty
B.Gulko-V.Smyslov
USSR Championship, Leningrad 1977
English Opening

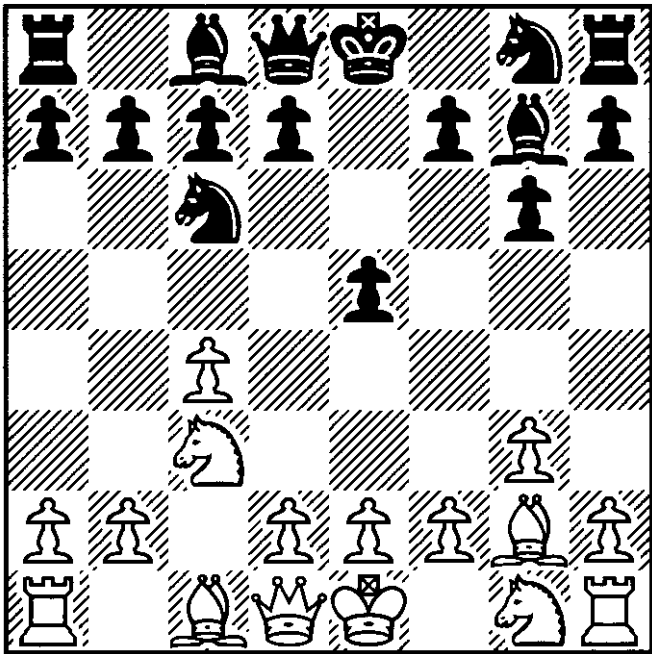
Joel: Was this the year you won the USSR Championship?

Boris: Yes.

Joel: How did you feel playing Smyslov?

Boris: In 1977 Smyslov was 56. I thought he was an old man and my strategy was to make the game a dynamic struggle and outplay him tactically. Of course when I was 56 myself I didn't consider myself old or as someone who could be outplayed tactically. Perhaps I was too self-confident back then.

1 c4 e5 2 g3 Nc6 3 Bg2 g6 4 Nc3 Bg7



Joel: You end up in a reversed Closed Sicilian?

Boris: Yes, and Smyslov's games in this opening are classics.

Joel: Why did you go into it then?

Boris: This opening gives rise to very complicated positions and, as I said, I hoped

to use my best qualities (in those years I was very good at dynamic play filled with tactical chances) and to outplay him in a sharp struggle.

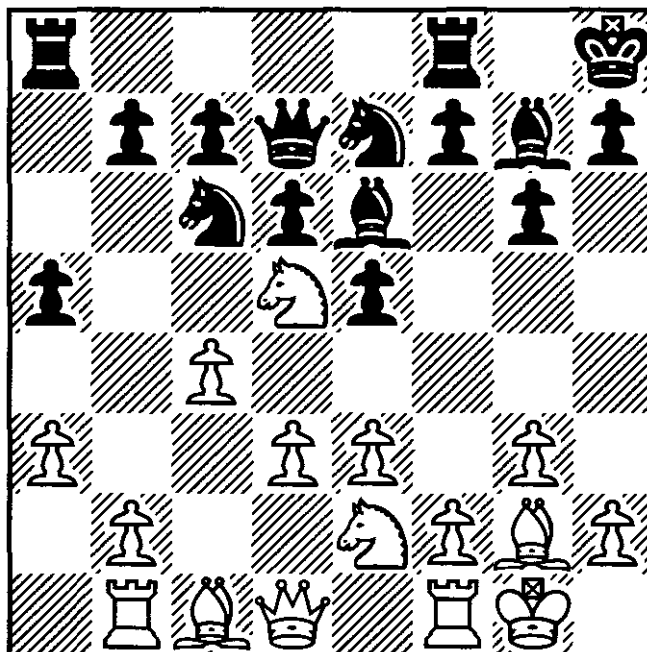
5 e3 d6 6 Nge2 Nge7 7 Rb1 a5 8 d3 Be6 9 Nd5 Qd7 10 a3

Boris: It is safer to postpone castling, as after 10 0-0 Black can try to create an attack against the white king with 10...h5!?

10...0-0

Boris: Black doesn't have time to fix White's queenside with 10...a4? because of 11 Nec3.

11 0-0 Kh8



Exercise: Is 12 b4 is appropriate? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White has more space on the queenside, his pieces are nicely posted for queenside expansion, and 12 b4 seems completely natural. Black's plan in the position is to play ...f7-f5 or ...Bh3, exchanging off White's important light-squared bishop. If 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 Bh3 14 Bxh3 Qxh3 15 Nxc7 and White is winning. If 12 b4 axb4 13 axb4 f5 14 b5 (so Black cannot play ...c7-c6 to kick the knight without opening the b-file for White's rooks) 14...Nd8 (covering the b7-pawn) 15 f4 (preventing Black's ...f5-f4) and White is doing fine.

Boris: Your considerations are correct on one level, but more deeply I don't agree. One of the most important factors in estimating a position is the prospective of

the minor pieces. Do they have good squares onto which they can be transferred? If I had played 12 b4, Smyslov could have replied 12...axb4 13 axb4 and now, typical for his style, 13...Bxd5! 14 cxd5 Na7 and Black's knight has a cozy square on b5 which, together with the a-file and the possibility of ...c7-c6, would give Black a good game.

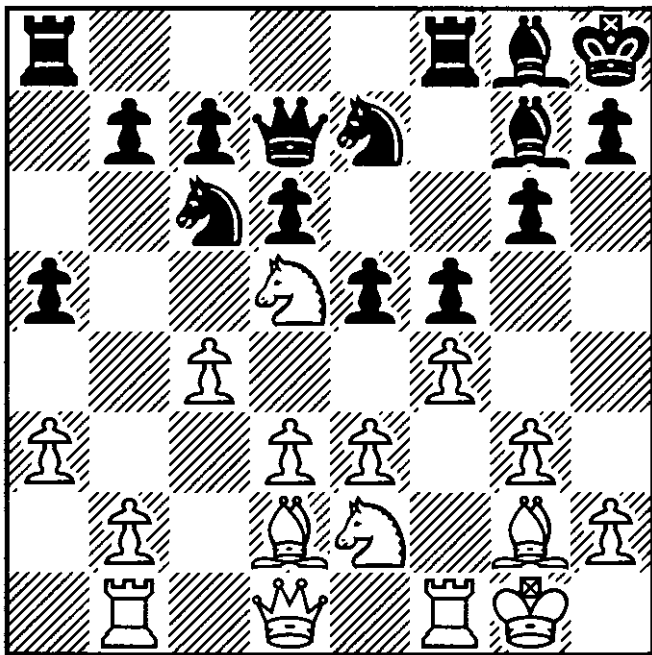
Joel: What style are you referring to?

Boris: Smyslov was a great master of finding good squares for his pieces, harmonizing his position, and changing the position quietly in his favor. He was not so inclined towards sharp variations. This variation shows his style very nicely.

Joel: So the fact that the black knight gets a terrific outpost on b5 essentially makes this variation bad for White?

Boris: Yes, though bad may be too strong a word. White just doesn't have any advantage. It is better to avoid giving Black such opportunities.

12 Bd2! f5 13 f4 Bg8



Exercise: What is Black preparing? What should White do? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Black is preparing to evict the knight from the d5-square with 14...Nxd5 15 cxd5 Ne7. To prepare this, he retreats the bishop so that 14...Nxd5 doesn't lose a piece. What should White do? I am thinking about three candidate moves: 14 Nec3 (reinforcing the d5-knight), 14 Bc3 (challenging Black's dark-squared bishop), and 14 e4 (preventing Black's kingside expansion). I like the move 14 Nec3 because

it makes evicting the knight from d5 harder (without giving up the bishop pair). If 14...Nxd5 (following his plan), then 15 Nxd5 and Black cannot play 15...Ne7 without losing a pawn because of 16 Nxe7 Qxe7 17 Bxb7.

Boris: In such complicated positions there is not one strategic way. It is nice that you understood Black's plan, but I didn't play 14 Nec3 because it allowed Black to get rid of his poorly placed knight on e7.

Joel: Interesting; I wasn't thinking about Black getting rid of his bad pieces but about White keeping his good pieces.

Boris: White has more space and it is easier for him to maneuver his pieces. Therefore, unless exchanges bring him additional advantages, White has to avoid exchanges. In your variation, 14 Nec3 Nxd5 15 Nxd5, Black has 15...Nd8 followed by ...Ne6 and, after this, preparing ...c7-c6.

14 Qa4!

Boris: By threatening to increase the pressure with 15 Qb5, White forces Black to take on d5.

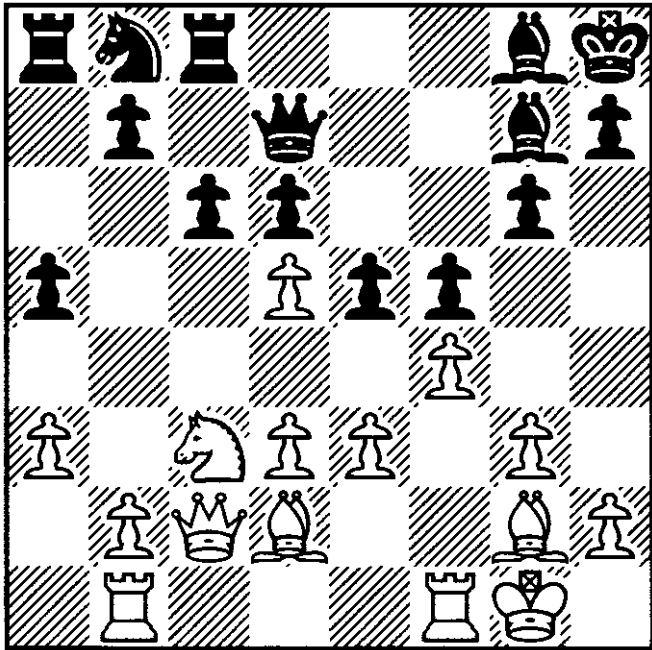
14...Nxd5 15 cxd5 Nb8 16 Qc2!

Boris: Now that I have forced Black to play his knight back to b8, I hope to take advantage of its poor placement.

Joel: That makes sense and explains why you didn't trade queens, but why did you play 16 Qc2 - ? What about 16 Qb3 - ?

Boris: 16 Qb3 would have been bad in all senses because I have to be able to play b2-b4 or to put pressure on c7 down the c-file. There are also tactical reasons why it is bad. It allows 16...Na6 and if 17 Qxb7 then 17...Nc5 and Black is better.

16...c6 17 Nc3 Rc8



Exercise: What is the best way for White to proceed? (difficulty level 4)

18 dxc6!

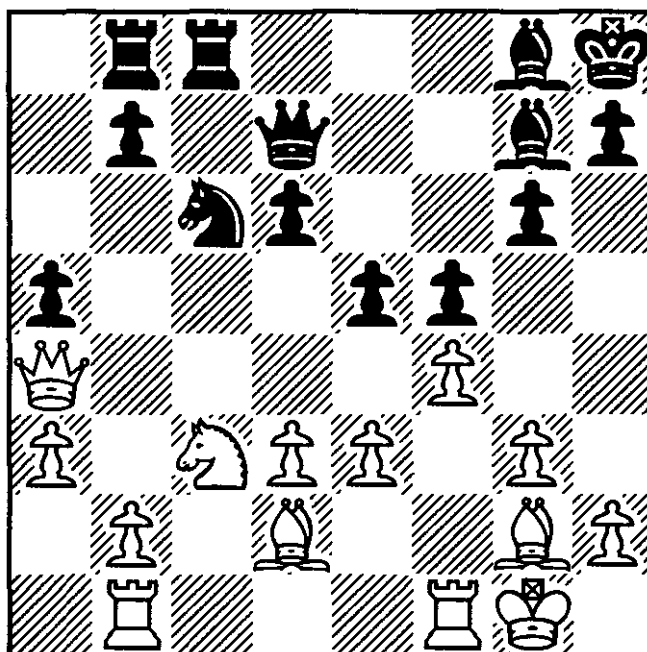
Boris: Here I thought for 20 minutes and could not find a way to keep my advantages: 18 Na4?! Qd8! followed by ...Nd7 didn't promise anything. At last I discovered the paradoxical 18 dxc6!. For me, this was the most difficult move of the game. First, I forced the knight back to b8 and now I permit the knight to return with 18...Nxc6. But the most important factor is that with this exchange I fixed the a4-, b5-, and d5-squares as weaknesses for Black. I would add that the exchange of positional advantages is one of the most difficult aspects of positional playing; i.e. giving up one positional advantage in exchange for another positional advantage.

Joel: What about 18...bxc6 - ? I know that this deprives the knight of getting back into the game, but it also deprives White of the important d5-square.

Boris: In the case of 18...bxc6 I planned to play 19 e4, initiating action on the king-side and taking advantage of Black's misplaced knight and rooks. The main idea is that opening up the position favors White because of Black's poorly placed knight and rook on c8. Now I think that 19 fxe5 Bxe5 20 Na4, followed by Bc3, was probably even better.

18...Nxc6 19 Qa4! Rab8!

Boris: In the case of 19...Rd8 White has 20 Nd5 with a clear advantage. After Smyslov's move, Black has the resource ...b7-b5.

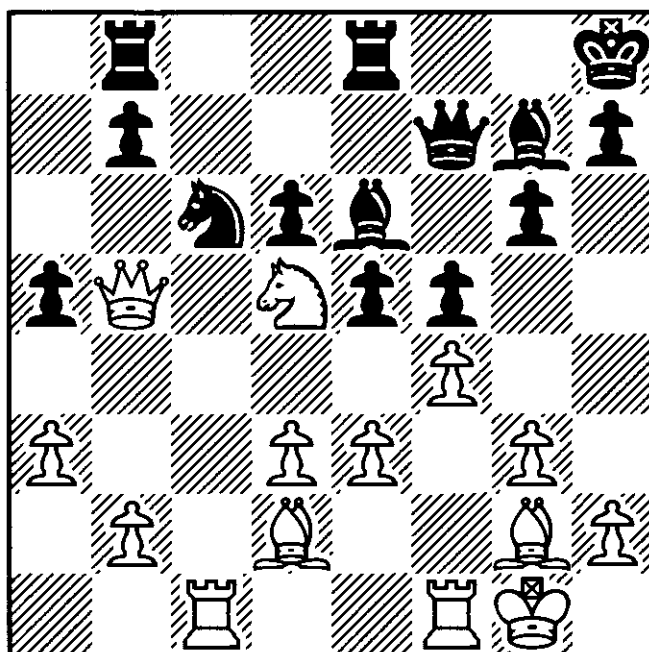


Exercise: What is White's plan and how to initiate it? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White's plan must be to control the light squares in Black's camp and restrain Black's queenside, i.e. keep him bottled up. I considered a number of candidate moves, including 20 b4, 20 Nd5, 20 Qb5 and 20 Nb5. I rejected 20 Nb5 because of 20...Na7, taking advantage of the fact that the knight is pinned. I also rejected 20 Nd5 because of 20...b5 21 Qd1 b4 22 axb4 Nxb4!. The move 20 b4 was interesting, but after 20...axb4 21 axb4 b5! the queen must retreat and Black has freed his game. The move 20 Qb5, however, does not suffer from any of these drawbacks and prevents Black from playing ...b7-b5. Therefore, I chose 20 Qb5.

Boris: With his previous moves White created weaknesses on the light squares d5 and b5, and so his plan must be (according to Nimzowitsch) to blockade these squares. The blockading of these squares will spread paralysis to all of Black's position. Among the moves you considered, only one fixed these weaknesses and prevented ...d6-d5 or ...b7-b5, which would solve Black's problems. In the variations you considered there were also small tactical inaccuracies, but your general conclusion was correct.

20 Qb5 Be6 21 Nd5 Qf7 22 Rbc1 Re8



Exercise: What is White's plan and how to execute it? (difficulty level 4)

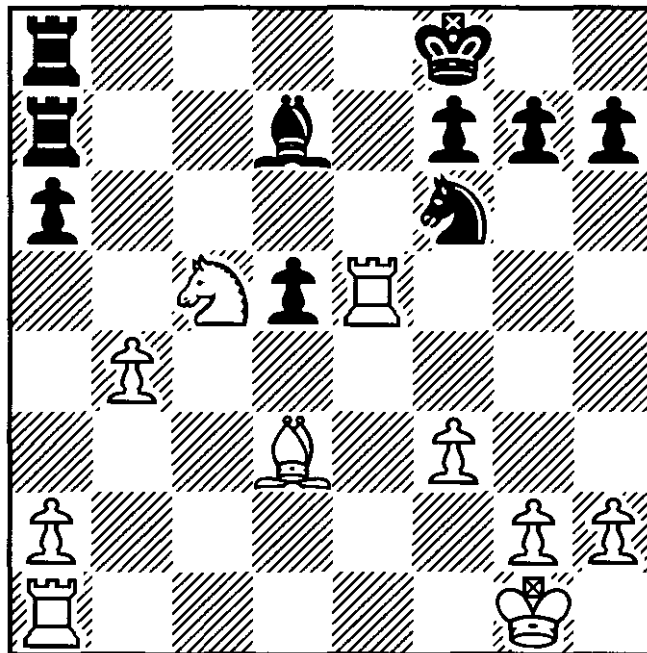
Joel: I considered 23 Rc2 and 23 Bxa5. The move 23 Rc2 is in the service of doubling rooks on the open c-file. After 23...Bd7 White has 24 Qb6, but after 23...exf4! White has to take with his g-pawn (weakening his kingside), because taking with the knight looks bad; e.g. 24 Nxf4 Bb3 25 Rc1 Bxb2. Therefore, I rejected this move. The move 23 Bxa5, however, looks good. For example, 23...Nxa5 24 Qxa5 exf4 25 gxf4 Bxb2 26 Rc7 Qf8 (or 26...Qg8) followed by 27 Rfb1.

Boris: The move 23 Rc2 is not good positionally and, as usually happens in that case, is not good tactically either. With the knight on c6 and the pawn on b7, the c-file is not open; therefore, what is the use of doubling your rooks on a non-open file? Another reason I don't like this plan with 23 Rc2 is because the rook on f1 is nicely placed and ready for action. Also, in the variation you considered, after 25...Bxb2 White has 26 Rb1 winning a bishop. The final drawback of the move 23 Rc2 is that it permits 23...e4! 24 dxe4 fxe4 25 Bxe4 Bd7! with the double threat of 26...Rxe4 or 26...Nd4.

The solution you came to (23 Bxa5) is a good one, and is one of two good ways to proceed. It is a matter of style. Usually I prefer bishops to knights so I didn't want to exchange my bishop for his knight. I also try to keep positions more, rather than less, complicated and so didn't want to simplify. My plan is to transfer the knight from d5 to c4, attacking both the a5- and d6-pawns. Because Black didn't have a good defense against this plan (the exchange of bishops on c4 leads to a fatal

weakening of the light squares in his camp), he started action on the kingside as a last resort. In fact he is forced to start this action, even though it was also in my interest. Often, chess players worry about their nicely placed pieces too much, forgetting that the pieces are part of a team. It looks like the white knight is ideally placed on d5, but to work as part of a team it has to be placed on the less beautiful c4-square.

A great example of the right attitude towards beautifully placed knights is the most famous move played in the Fischer-Petrosian match (game 7), Buenos Aires 1971:

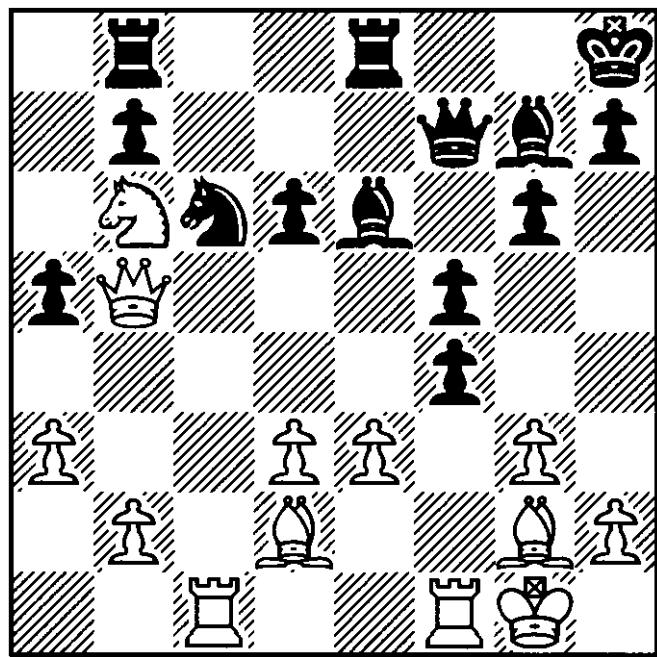


In this position, Fischer played 22 Nxd7+!!, exchanging his nice knight for Petrosian's bad bishop, and received a technically winning position.

Joel: Why is this technically winning?

Boris: After this exchange Fischer takes control of the open c-file, and this consideration is more important than the superiority of the knight on c5 over the bishop on d7. In positions with a superior pawn structure, the exchange of pieces increases your advantage. The game ended quickly: 22...Rxd7 23 Rc1 Rd6 24 Rc7 Nd7 25 Re2 g6 26 Kf2 h5 27 f4 h4 28 Kf3 f5 29 Ke3 d4+ 30 Kd2 Nb6 31 Ree7 Nd5 32 Rf7+ Ke8 33 Rb7 Nxb4 34 Bc4 1-0.

23 Nb6! exf4



Exercise: How should White recapture? (difficulty level 3)

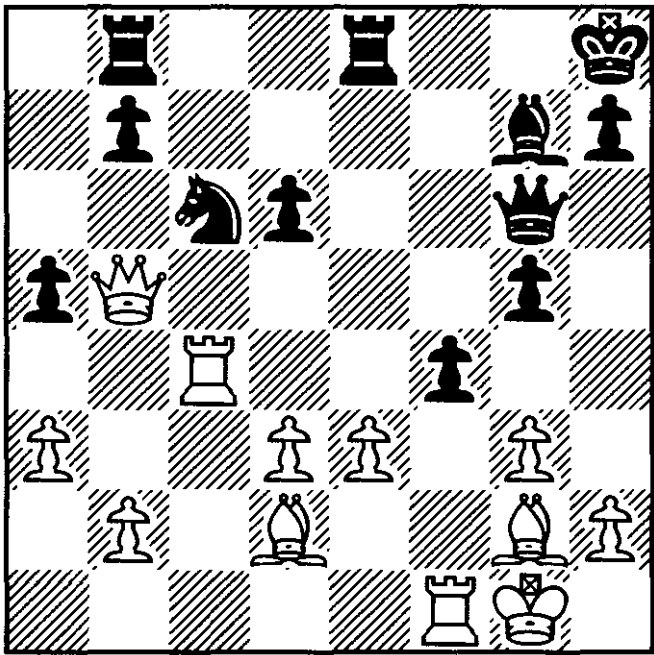
Joel: I would play 24 gxf4, because otherwise Black would get counterplay down the e-file (in the case of 24 exf4).

Boris: The move 24 exf4 does not even deserve consideration because it permits 24...Nd4. The move 24 gxf4 is possible; however, because White's position is more active, it is in his interest to provoke action on the kingside. Therefore, I played 24 Rxf4.

Joel: How does 24 Rxf4 provoke kingside action?

Boris: 24 Rxf4 provokes 24...g5. Since kingside action was in my interest, I provoked it. It doesn't always make sense to prevent your opponent's plans if you see that those plans are in your favor.

24 Rxf4 g5 25 Rff1 Qg6 26 Nc4 Bxc4 27 Rxc4 f4

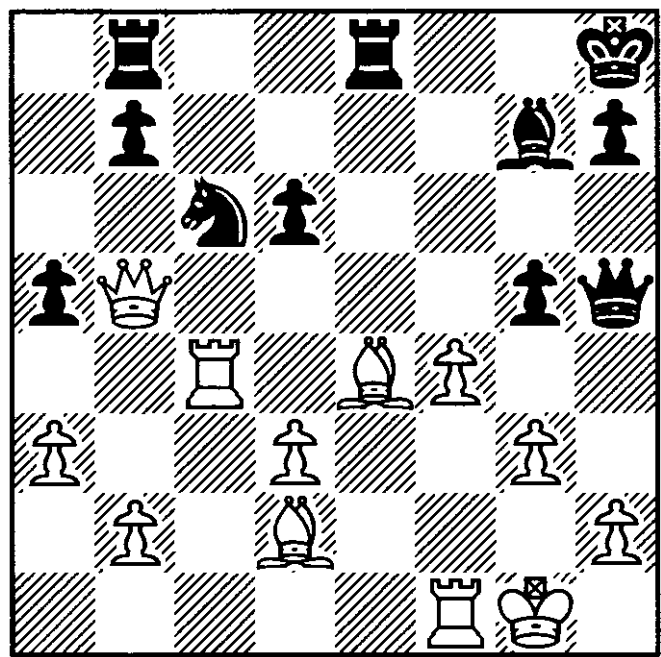


Exercise: What is the best way for White to use Black’s activity against him? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I would play 28 Be4 in a heartbeat. I wouldn’t even think about it. Its merits are too obvious.

Boris: Now your intuition is correct. Very often the first move our intuition offers us is the best. The move 28 Be4 really represents the triumph of White’s strategy. White created weaknesses on the light squares in the opening, forced Black to exchange his light-squared bishop, and now White’s light-squared bishop becomes the most significant piece in the position.

28 Be4 Qh5 29 exf4

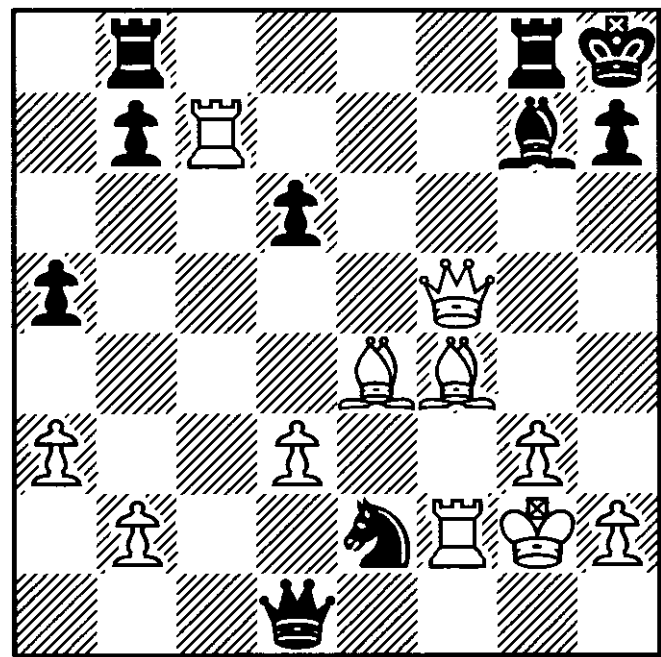


Exercise: Try to find a way for Black to muddy the waters. (difficulty level 3)

29...Qe2

Boris: This loses, so maybe it makes sense to try 29...d5!? 30 Qxd5! (30 Bxd5? would be very bad due to 30...Re2 31 Rf2 Rxf2 32 Kxf2 Nd4 with a tremendous attack for Black) 30...Rbd8 31 Qxg5 Bd4+ 32 Rxd4! (after 32 Kh1 Qe2 White would lose his advantage) 32...Qxg5 33 fxg5 Nxd4 34 Bxa5 with a winning position for White.

30 Rf2 Qd1+ 31 Kg2 gxf4 32 Bxf4 Nd4 33 Qg5 Ne2 34 Rc7 Rg8 35 Qf5! 1-0



Boris: The final exploitation of the light square weaknesses in Black's camp.

Joel: What I am learning is that I have good intuition, which I should trust, but I need to focus on sharpening my calculations and trying to be more accurate.

Boris: You are correct. You showed good intuition in solving the problems from this game but you need to sharpen your technique of calculation, and for this you need to train by calculating sharp positions.

Joel: I have spent quite a bit of time solving puzzle books, but this seems different.

Boris: Yes, this is different. It is not so much about solving combinations (White to move and win or mate books). You need to train to calculate long variations in practical games. The best method is to study the games of grandmasters and try to calculate variations in sharp positions and check your analysis against their analysis. A second method is to solve studies. In general, it is good to combine both methods.

As for the game, the first part consisted of a complicated strategic struggle. White's 18 dxc6! demonstrates the transformation of one kind of positional advantage into another (weak squares). This topic is the most important lesson of the game.

Joel: That's interesting. I thought the most important lesson was how to exploit the weakness of the light squares you created with 18 dxc6.

Boris: The move 18 dxc6 was the only difficult one for me to find. The rest of the game was relatively simple. Using the weakness of Black's light squares I forced Smyslov into a desperate kingside counterattack. I refuted his counterattack using (again) the weakness of the light squares.

Game Twenty-One
B.Gulko-M.Adams
Groningen 1990
Ruy Lopez

Boris: This was the last round of a tournament in which I was not very successful. Mickey had to make a draw with me to take clear first. I wanted to improve my spirit, though, because in a week I had to start a new tournament in Reggio Emilia, which was a successful tournament for me.

I like very much to play this variation of the Ruy Lopez (without the move h2-h3) against players who are very classical in their style, because it leads to very unbalanced positions. I was successful using this variation against Portisch, Geller, and Ivkov as well.

1 e4

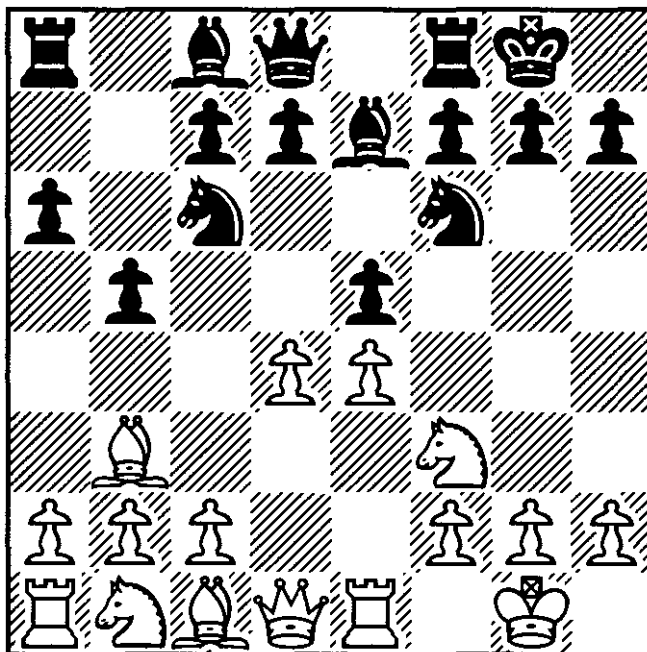
Joel: I was surprised to see you play 1 e4, having seen so many flank openings or d2-d4 openings from you.

Boris: I played 1 e4 very often before emigration. After emigration, I only played 1 e4 if I expected 1...e5. I stopped playing 1 e4 because of the forced variations of the Sveshnikov Sicilian and the Petroff Defense.

Joel: Do you think it is important (critical) for class players to learn all the openings (the Ruy Lopez in particular)? I read that your friend Lev Psakhis said it was important to know these fundamental positions in order to improve your chess game.

Boris: I would recommend players who are not so experienced to start with one opening and add additional openings when they get bored. If you play too many in the beginning it will be too difficult and overwhelming. I don't think it is more important to know the Ruy Lopez compared to some other opening such as the French, for example. GMs Uhlmann and Vaganian have played the French their whole life, and as White played 1 d4, so this suggests to me it is not obligatory. Chess is very rich with many different types of positions and you have to know the positions that you play.

1...e5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 Bb5 a6 4 Ba4 Nf6 5 O-O Be7 6 Re1 b5 7 Bb3 O-O 8 d4



Boris: This move avoids the Marshall counterattack (8 c3 d5) but also doesn't allow White to play the classical Ruy Lopez (with h2-h3). However, it is exactly the variation that I like to play.

8...d6 9 c3 Bg4 10 Be3 exd4

Boris: In those years the game continuation was the main line. Later on, Romanishin popularized another variation beginning with the move 10...Bh5. Ten days after my game with Adams, I played Romanishin in Reggio Emilia and the following forced variation occurred: 10...Bh5 11 h3 Bg6 12 Nbd2 Nxe4?! (Black had to avoid this) 13 Bd5 Nxd2 14 Bxd2 Qd7 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 Bxc6 Qxc6 17 Nxe5 Qd6 18 Bf4 Qf6 19 Bg3 Rfe8 20 Nxg6 hxg6 21 Bxc7 and White won a pawn and eventually the game.

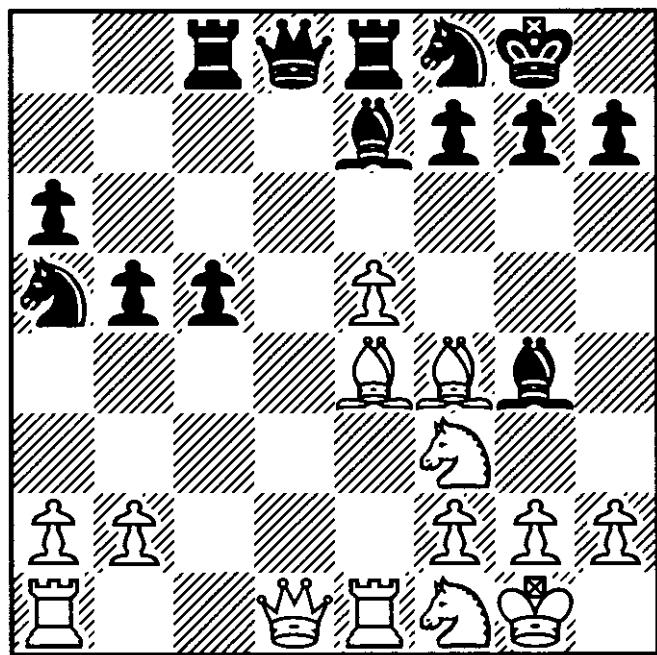
11 cxd4 Na5 12 Bc2 c5 13 dxc5 dxc5 14 Nbd2 Nd7 15 Bf4!

Boris: White has to take control of the important e5-square.

15...Re8 16 e5!? Nf8 17 Be4 Rc8

Boris: Black has to take control of the c6-square, preparing to bring his knight back into the game. Worse was 17...Ra7 18 Qc2 because now he doesn't have 18...Nc6 harassing my queen.

18 Nf1!



Boris: My friend Lev Psakhis was impressed with my game and tried to repeat it at the chess Olympiad. He deviated here from my game by playing 18 Qc2, but after 18...Nc6 19 Rad1 Nd4 20 Qb1 Qb6 Black obtained an excellent position in L.Psakhis-J.Cooper, Manila Olympiad 1992. Using the position of Black's bishop on g4, White wants his knight to reach the e3-square with tempo, en route to the sensitive d5- or f5-squares.

18...Ne6 19 Bg3 Nd4

Boris: White would have a very active position if Black decided to transpose to an endgame: 19...Qxd1 20 Raxd1 Nd4 21 Ne3 Nxf3+ 22 gxf3 Be6 23 f4! Nc6 24 b3 and White will follow with f4-f5.

20 Ne3 Bh5 21 Nf5!

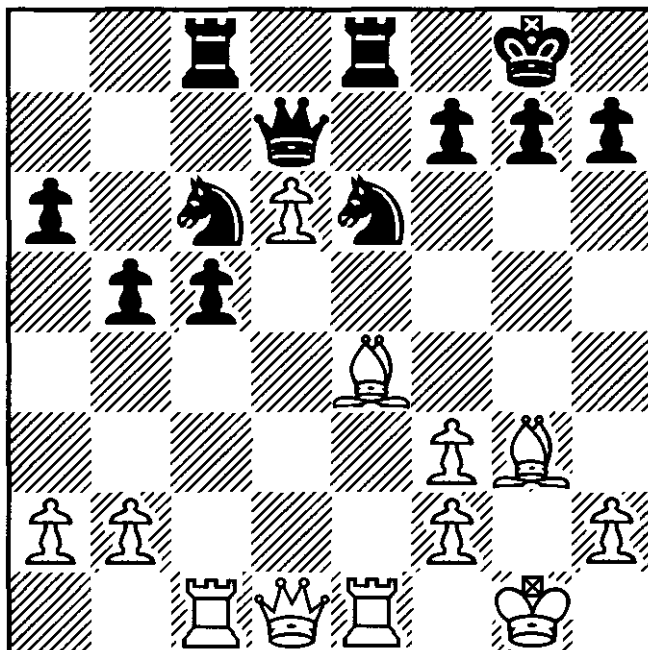
Boris: Playing aggressively; the knight heads for d6.

21...Bxf3 22 gxf3 Nac6

Boris: Mickey Adams is a chess player with a classical style, but in this position it was preferable to play 22...Nc4! 23 b3 Nd2! with unclear consequences.

23 Rc1! Qd7 24 Nd6 Bxd6 25 exd6 Ne6

Boris: After 25...c4 26 b3 White's position would be preferable.



Exercise: Black's position looks as solid as a rock;
how can White cause Black's construction to tremor? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: My first thought is 26 Bf5, pinning the knight and threatening 27 Rxc5. However, 26...Ncd4 looks strong as it attacks the bishop, supports the pinned knight, and permits the rook on c8 to guard the c5-pawn. The next two moves I am looking at are 26 f4 and 26 Qd3. I think I would first play 26 Qd3, which may induce Black into weakening his kingside with either 26...h6 or 26...g6, when pushing f3-f4 becomes a more important threat.

Boris: Black's plan is to play 26...Ncd4, restricting White's queen, so White has to place the queen in an active position before Black can restrict her movement. Your offer 26 Qd3 permits 26...c4 or 26...h6 and White has to solve the same problem.

26 Qd5! g6

Joel: It is very interesting that in response to your move Black plays what I expected against my suggestion (26 Qd3). Can you explain 26...g6 - ? What is its purpose?

Boris: After Black rejected 26...Ncd4, which was his plan, he decided to restrict White's bishop on e4 and maintain a solid position. The move 26...Ncd4 gives White the opportunity to play 27 Qb7, exchanging Black's queen which blocks the d-pawn, and activating White's bishop.

27 Qd2!

Boris: Continuing to shake Black's position. The white queen repositions herself in an effort to take advantage of the dark square weaknesses created by the move 26...g6.

27...Kg7

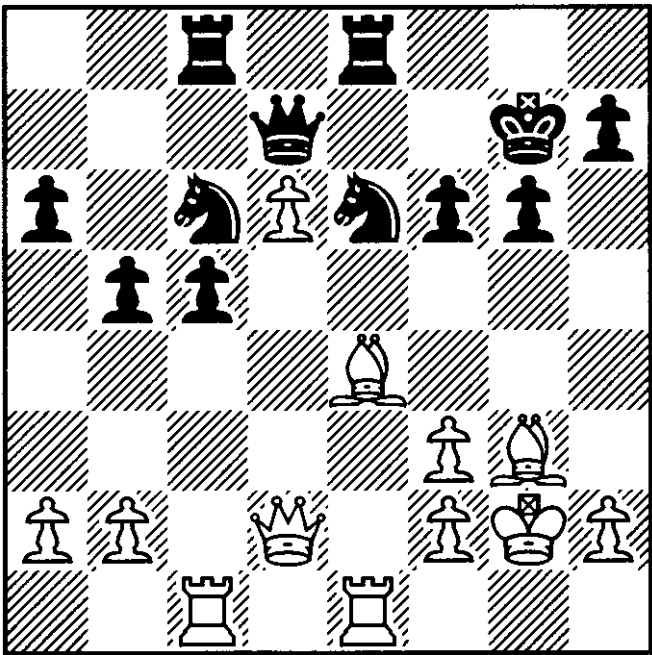
Boris: Again my opponent plays the most solid continuation. Interesting complications could have arisen after 27...Ned4! 28 Kg2 Ne5 29 b4 (not bad either was 29 Rxc5 Rxc5 30 Qxd4 Rc4 31 Qd5 Nc6 32 Rd1 with enough compensation for the exchange) 29...Qxd6 30 Bb7 with an intricate position.

28 Kg2!

Boris: In the case of 28 Bd5 Black would maintain equilibrium with 28...f6!, covering the important e5-square; whereas the tempting 28...Ned4? 29 Rxe8 Rxe8 30 Rxc5 Qh3 31 Qd1! Ne2+ 32 Kh1 Ncd4 33 Rc7 would be good for White.

28...f6!

Boris: Black covers important dark squares. The immediate 28...Ncd4? was bad because of 29 b4!.



Exercise: What should White play? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: My intuition is telling me that White should aim to weaken Black's kingside. How can he accomplish that? I think the move 29 h4 makes a lot of sense (perhaps

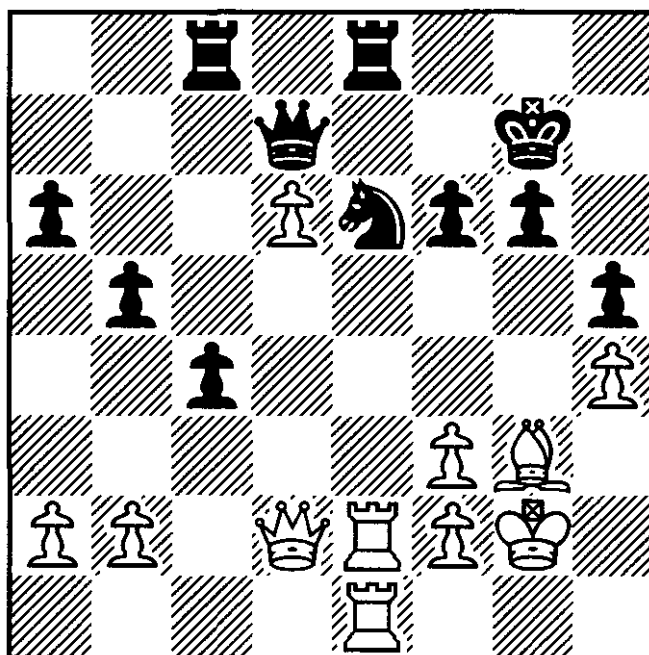
together with f3-f4 at some point). The idea obviously is to chip away at Black's kingside, create a further weakening, and perhaps swing the rooks over to the h-file if possible. 29 h4 also stops ...Ne6-g5 which attacks f3 and threatens ...Qh3+.

Boris: Black again is ready to play 29...Ncd4 with a good position and your suggestion doesn't prevent it. But with his last move, Black reduced his protection of the e6-knight and, together with it, the e-file. White can use it by suddenly exchanging his light-squared bishop.

29 Bxc6! Rxc6 30 Re2 Rcc8

Boris: 30...f5 was unattractive for Black because of 31 Be5+ Kg8 32 Qd5 with a very unpleasant pin.

31 Rce1 c4 32 h4 h5



Exercise: Black's position has become a house of cards.
How can White bring it down? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: The natural move in this position is 33 f4, but the problem is that White's dark-squared bishop might end up being completely shut in after 33...f5. The knight on e6, however, is only defended two times and 33 Qd5 forces Black to play 33...Nc7, when 34 Qb7 pins the knight and threatens the pawn on a6.

Boris: Here we have an extremely rare case of zugzwang in the middlegame so the solution the problem is the waiting move 33 a3!. Now Black has to worsen his po-

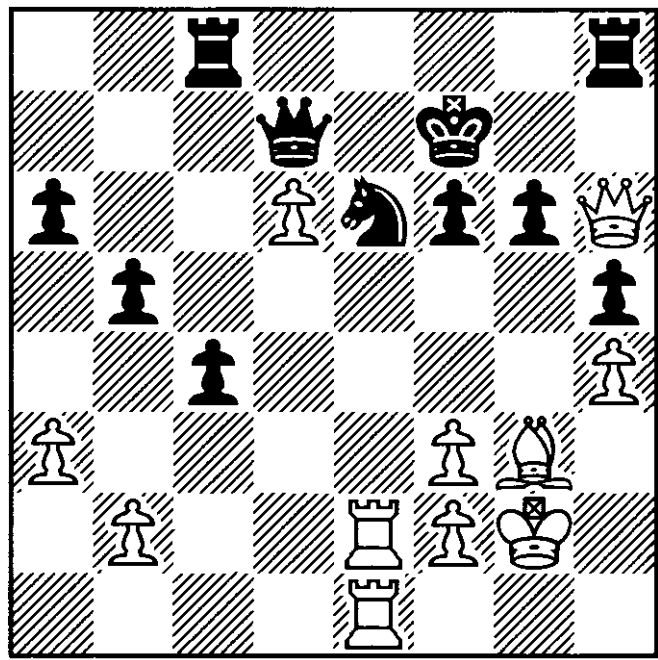
sition. After your suggestion, 33 Qd5, Black can play 33...Kf7 when it is not easy for White to find a move that improves his position.

33 a3!!

Boris: In the case of 33 Qa5 Black has a good defense in 33...Rc6.

33...Rcd8

Boris: Black didn't have 33...Ra8 because of 34 Qd5 Kf7 35 Rxe6 and White is winning; while 33...Kf7 would now lose to 34 Qh6 Rh8 and then:



Exercise: Find the winning combination for White. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I would play 35 Rxe6!. After 35...Rxh6 (35...Qxe6 36 Rxe6 Rxh6 37 Re7+ transposes) 36 Re7+ Qxe7 37 Rxe7+ Kf8 38 d7 Rd8 39 Bd6 and I think White wins.

Boris: Your solution is correct. I would add 39...Rh8 40 f4 f5 41 Kf3 a5 42 Ke3 and Black is defenseless.

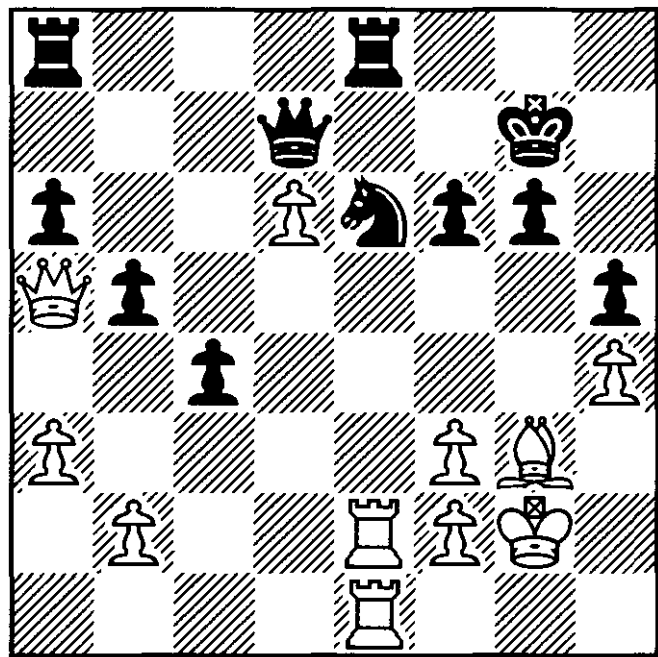
34 Qa5!

Joel: Why do you give this move an exclamation point?

Boris: After 33 a3 Black had to make his position worse, which he did with 33...Rcd8. Now Black cannot defend the a6-pawn with ...Rc6.

34...Kf7

Another defense of the a6-pawn was 34...Ra8, but this permits a forced win for White.



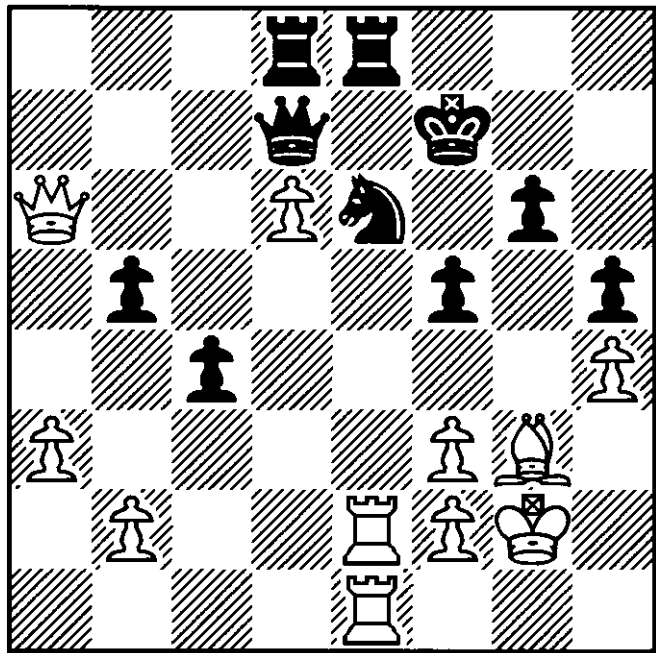
Exercise: Can you find it? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I like 35 Rxe6 Rxe6 36 Rxe6 Qxe6 37 Qc7+. I stopped here as I cannot see Black stopping the d-pawn without giving up the rook, when White will be up a piece.

Boris: Your intuition was correct, but you have to see the answer to Black’s best defense: 37...Kh6 38 d7 Qe7 39 Qc8 Qd8 40 Qxa8 Qxa8 41 Bc7 and White wins.

Joel: Clever! I didn’t see that maneuver at all.

35 Qxa6 f5



Exercise: In order to prevent ...f5-f4, White has to move the king.
To which square? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I am not sure I like moving the king at all. 36 Kh3 walks into a discovered check, 36 Kh2 takes away the only retreat square for the bishop. In some variations Black can play ...Nf4+ or ...Nd4 and then ...Nxf3+. Therefore, I would have preferred to get out of the way of any of this and play 36 Kf1 (adding support to the e1-rook). Truthfully, I would probably try to prevent ...f5-f4 with a piece move such as 36 Be5 rather than moving the king.

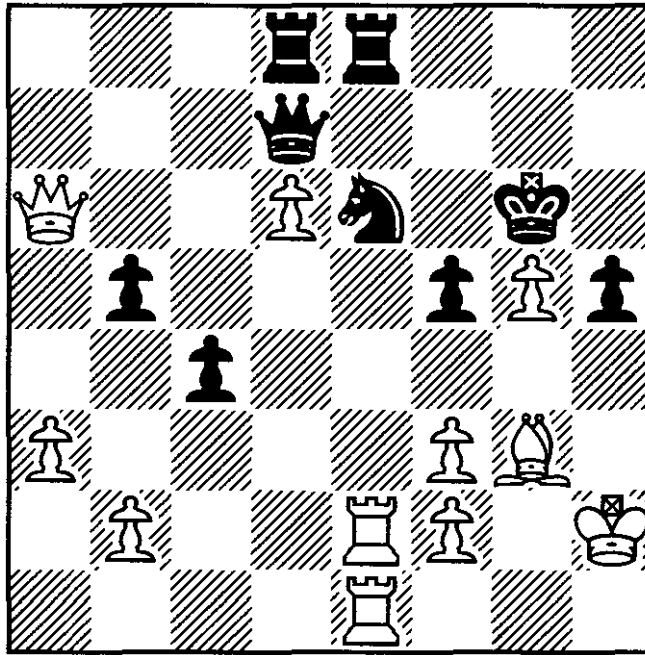
Boris: Playing 36 Be5 would close the e-file for your rooks, which create dangerous threats. After 36 Be5, Black has 36...Nc5 37 Qb6 Nd3 and it is White who is losing. The whole position hinges on White maintaining domination of the e-file. By moving the king, you are ready after ...f5-f4 to take on f4 and give check on e7 with the rook, but this combination only works with the king on h2. In other cases: 36 Kg1? f4 37 Bxf4 Nxf4 38 Re7+ Kf6 39 Rxd7 Rxe1+ wins for Black, or 36 Kf1? f4 37 Bxf4 Nxf4 38 Re7+ Rxe7 39 Rxe7+ Qxe7 40 dxe7 Rd1 mate. Only with 36 Kh2 does White prevent 36...f4.

Joel: I didn't see this combination.

Boris: We spoke about this. It is impossible to win against a strong grandmaster without at some stage having to solve tactical problems; that is, you cannot win on strategy alone.

36 Kh2! g5 37 hxg5 Kg6

Boris: The attempt 37...h4 doesn't work since White clearly wins with 38 Bf4! Kg6 39 Qb6! Nxf4 40 Rxe8 Rxe8 41 Rxe8 and Black cannot take back because of 41...Qxe8 42 d7+.

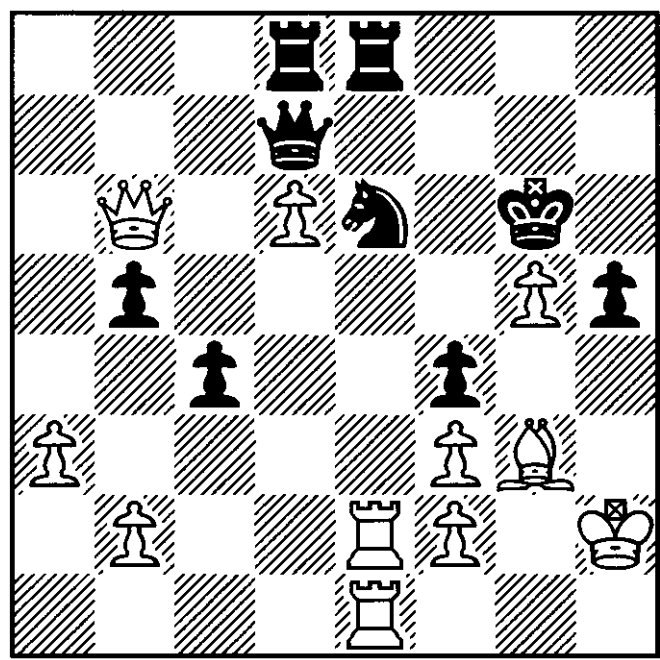


Exercise: How to break through Black's defense? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I can't seem to break through in the most obvious ways, e.g. 38 Rxe6 or something like that. Black seems to be tied down so perhaps it makes sense to create threats on the other wing with 38 a4, when White will be able to take advantage of the open position better than Black whose major pieces are stuck blockading the d6-pawn.

Boris: With the moves 36...g5 and 37...Kg6, Black resumed the threat of ...f5-f4. So your move 38 a4 would permit Black to escape all his problems by playing 38...f4. White has to prevent the move ...f5-f4 tactically by playing 38 Qb6!.

38 Qb6! f4



Exercise: What would you do? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: I think White has to play 39 Rxe6+, since 39 Bxf4 leads to mate after 39...Nxf4 (threatening 40...Qh3+ and mate next move). 39 Rxe6+ wins though, because after 39...Rxe6 40 Rxe6+ Qxe6 41 Qxd8 fxg3+ 42 Kxg3 White has a strong passed pawn and there is no immediate way for Black's queen to get at White's king.

Boris: You're right. 38...Ra8 was also completely hopeless after 39 Re5, attacking the b-pawn, and preparing 40 Qe3 attacking the knight.

39 Rxe6+! Rxe6 40 Rxe6+ Qxe6 41 Qxd8 fxg3+ 42 Kxg3 Qe5+ 43 Kg2 1-0

Joel: I think what I am seeing over and over again is your ability to use principles in a flexible way (for example, giving up your strong light-squared bishop for Black's knight) as opposed to rigidly applying rules as I do.

Boris: This game is interesting because, with quiet queen maneuvers on moves 26 and 27, White shook the foundation of Black's very solid position. From an aesthetic point of view, there was a very unusual zugzwang in the middlegame after White's 33 a3!!. The last part of the game proved again that playing against a strong player you cannot get by on strategy alone, you must solve tactical problems precisely. Your point about flexibility is well taken as the game also shows the importance of transforming one advantage into another advantage. Alekhine wrote in an article devoted to his match with Capablanca that, after the 1924 New

York tournament, he realized the nature of Capablanca's advantage over him. He realized that Capablanca was not afraid to lose his advantage during the game and, because of this, his playing was more flexible.

Game Twenty-Two
B.Gulko-A.Karpov
Dos Hermanas 1994
Caro-Kann Defense

This was the first game we prepared and we had not yet arrived at the best method of working. At this point, we were relying more on the method of explaining the ideas, and the diagrams were not yet set as tasks for solving. But now we invite the readers to solve the positions in the diagrams for themselves.

Boris: This game occurred at the time when I was preparing for my match against Nigel Short to see who would play Kasparov for the world championship title.

Joel: Were you nervous playing Karpov?

Boris: I like challenges, I like to struggle and fight against the best. That's very exciting to me. Also, I grew up (as did my generation in the USSR) believing that, generally, reputations were not to be trusted. Of course, it is hard to be a fake in chess (compared to politics) because if you are weak you will simply lose. Perhaps some of this general belief persisted in the world of chess. The idea of not trusting reputations contrasted sharply with what I experienced when I first came to the United States. I found chess players to be much more polite; e.g. offering a draw to a higher rated player in better positions. We would never do that; we would want to beat them, even make them suffer.

1 e4

Joel: Why did you decide to open with 1 e4 - ?

Boris: In my preparation for the match against Short, who played mostly 1 e4, I noticed that Karpov had played a dubious line with Black against Timman and Ivanchuk in the Advance Variation and I was hoping he would play the same against me. Additionally, I prepared an important novelty in the main line of the variation I played in the game.

1...c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 Bf5 4 h4

Boris: Tal introduced this move against Botvinnik in the 1962 revenge match for the World Championship. Obviously, if Black now plays 4...e6 he will lose the bishop.

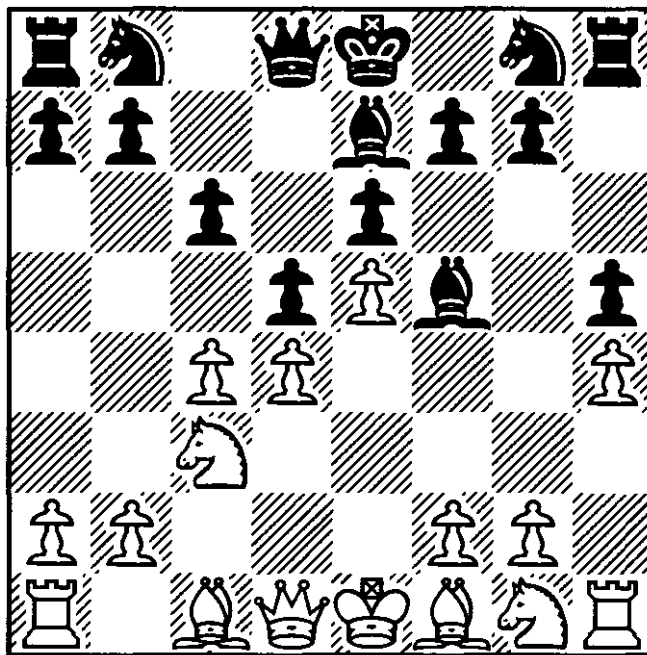
4...h5

Boris: In their match Botvinnik played 4...h6 several times, leading to a favorable pawn structure for White; e.g. with pawns on h5, g4, and f4, which is White's dream. But then Botvinnik found 4...h5 in the middle of the match. Theory considers this to be the best answer.

5 c4

Joel: We are taught not to move too many pawns in the opening. I know there is quite a bit of opening theory here, but can you explain why you can play like this?

Boris: All chess rules are relative. Enforcing one rule violates another. This is a closed position that cannot open quickly. Here it is more important to obtain the best possible pawn structure. Here I am following Philidor's rule of developing the pieces behind pawns. In this closed position, it works.

5...e6 6 Nc3 Be7!

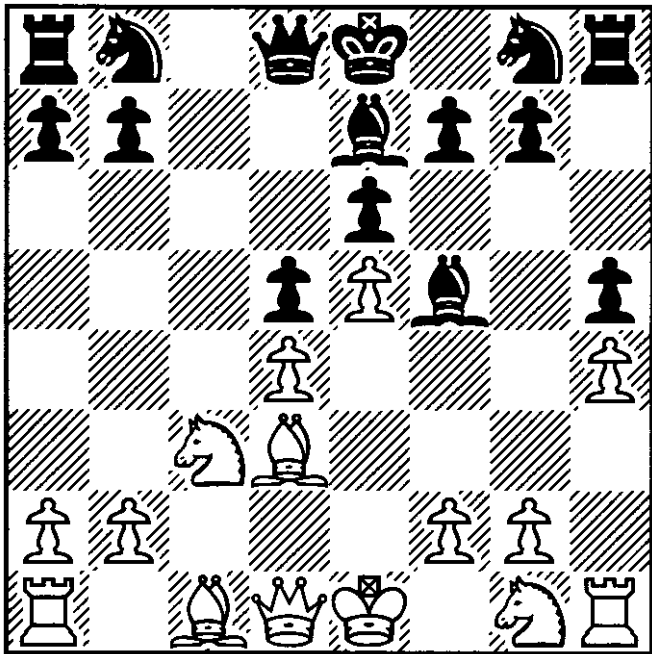
Joel: Why do you give an exclamation point to a move that seems so natural and obvious to make? You don't give those away for free.

Boris: Karpov thought for a long time and looked at me. I believe he must have sensed I had something prepared against the line he had played in his games against Timman and Ivanchuk, so he played the main theoretical line with 6...Be7. He was right. Against 6...Nd7, the move he previously played, I had prepared a novelty for my match with Short: 7 cxd5 cxd5 8 Bd3 Bxd3 9 Qxd3 Ne7 10 Bg5 f6 11

exf6 gxf6 12 Bd2 Kf7 13 Nge2 Ng6 14 g3 Bd6 15 Nb5 Bb8 16 Bb4 a6 17 Nbc3!
(rather than 17 Nd6+ Bxd6 18 Bxd6 Qb6! 19 Ba3 Qa5+!, as previously played in
V.Ivanchuk-A.Karpov, Tilburg rapid 1993). In the morning of our game, I prepared
another novelty against 6...Be7.

In the decisive game of his sensational victory at Wijk aan Zee (2011), Nakamura
played 6...Ne7 against Nepomniachtchi and won. This line was obscure at the time
of my game with Karpov.

7 cxd5 cxd5 8 Bd3!?



Boris: This was an important novelty that I prepared the morning of our game.

Joel: Can you explain this move? Aren't you exchanging off Black's "bad" bishop
for your "good" bishop?

Boris: If 8 Nf3 then Black can pin and eventually exchange his light-squared bishop
for my knight in a position in which knights are more valuable.

Joel: So why not play 8 Bb5 and exchange off his knight?

Boris: I repeat, all rules are relative. First we find good moves and then explain why
it is good. It is not simply that knights are better than bishops in this position, but
that my knight on g1 is a more important piece than his light-squared bishop on
f5. As long as that piece exists, I cannot play Ng1-f3. This would be a grave strate-
gic error.

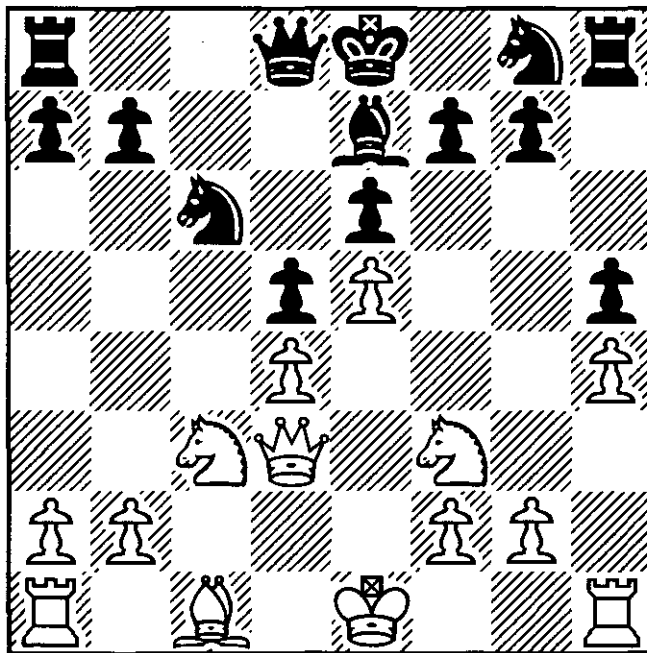
8...Bxd3 9 Qxd3

Boris: Now my queen is actively placed, looking at both sides of the board, and the only square available to his king's knight is h6.

9...Nc6

Boris: 9...Bxh4 doesn't win a pawn because White has 10 Qb5+ Nd7 (10...Nc6? 11 Rxh4!) 11 Qxb7.

10 Nf3



Exercise: How does Black have to proceed? (difficulty level 5)

Boris: This is a very interesting moment. Karpov thought for a very long time. He realized that if 10...Nh6 then 11 Bxh6 Rxh6 would leave his rook misplaced on h6. This would give me the advantage on the queenside where I would have two rooks to his one. This was the strategic idea behind my novelty. After a long think, he played:

10...Nb4!?

Boris: Anand demonstrated the correct way for Black to proceed against Short at Wijk aan Zee 2005. That game continued 10...Rc8! 11 g3 (11 a3!?, preventing ...Bb4, could be an improvement) 11...Bb4! (as I said earlier, knights are often better than bishops in such positions) 12 Bd2 Nge7 13 a3 Bxc3 14 Bxc3 Nf5 with equality.

11 Qe2 Rc8 12 0-0

Joel: Doesn't this just give him the h4-pawn?

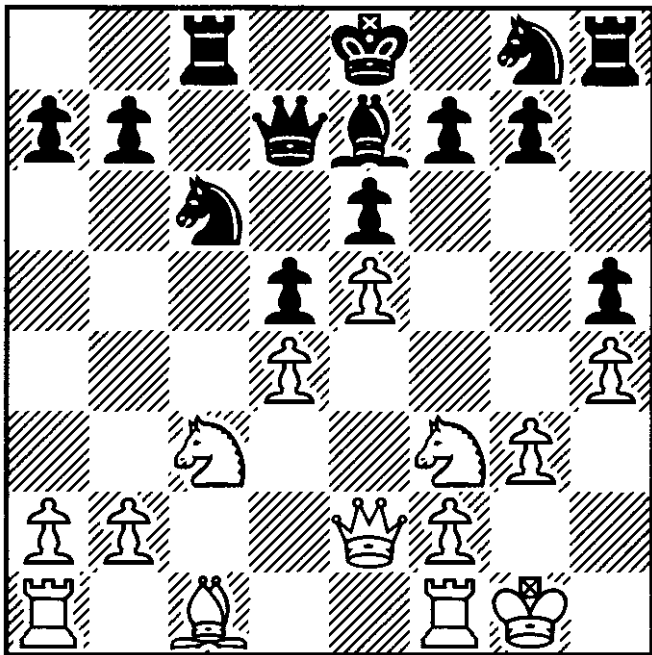
Boris: Taking the pawn was interesting, but I don't think he liked the unclear position that would have resulted. Objectively speaking it is better to have an unclear position than a worse position, so 12...Bxh4!? 13 Qb5+ Nc6 14 Qxb7 (14 Nxh4 Qxh4 15 Qxb7 Nge7) 14...Be7 15 Be3 was preferable. Psychologically speaking, you want your opponent to be as uncomfortable as possible, so I didn't anticipate that he would take my pawn.

12...Nc6

Joel: What has Black achieved with his knight excursion?

Boris: Karpov was very good at prophylaxis and destroying his opponent's plans. The queen is best placed on d3 so he disrupts my ideal set-up and forces me to put my queen on an inferior square. My queen returns to d3 later, so in reality he did not lose a tempo; he was just disturbing my thinking process.

13 g3 Qd7



Exercise: Where should White develop his bishop: d2 or e3? (difficulty level 3)

14 Bd2!

Boris: This is a very important prophylactic move. If I had played 14 Be3?! it would have allowed him to exchange off the dark-squared bishop and develop his knight to e7; e.g. 14...Bb4! 15 Rac1 Nge7 with equality. After 14 Bd2! I prevent 14...Bb4 because 15 Nb5! would follow.

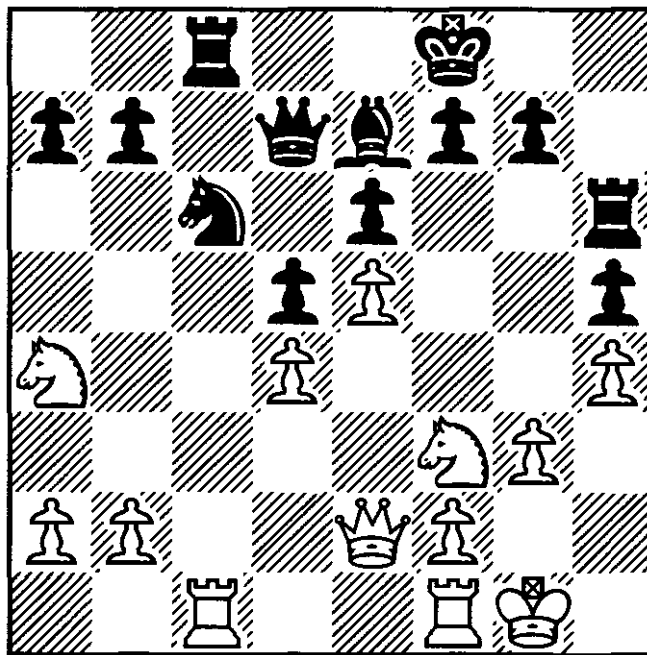
14...Nh6 15 Bxh6!

Joel: I know we have talked a lot about the threat of taking the knight if it moved to h6, but what aspect of the move is most important? Displacing his rook, getting rid of your “bad bishop”, or preventing him from castling?

Boris: The most important element is disturbing the coordination of his rooks. Now I have the direct plan of taking over the c-file. I have the more pleasant position with a clear-cut plan, whereas he must come up with something quite sophisticated.

15...Rxh6 16 Rac1 Kf8 17 Na4

Boris: Now my knight is heading to c5 or my queen to b5 with a lot of pressure on the queenside. Playing 17 a3 would have allowed him to relieve the pressure by 17...Na5 18 Qb5 Qxb5 19 Nxb5 Nc6.



Exercise: How can Black prevent 18 Qb5 - ? (difficulty level 3)

17...Rc7!

Boris: This is an excellent prophylactic move because 18 Qb5? would now be met by 18...Nxe5 winning. Therefore, I have to prepare my queenside breakthrough slowly. Karpov, along with Petrosian, was the best at preventing his opponent's plans.

18 Rc3 Rg6

Boris: Karpov plans to activate his rook on the g-file.

19 Rfc1 Rg4! 20 Qd3

Boris: So I have returned to d3, giving back the tempo he used on 10...Nb4. However, I return with the threat of Qh7, which he has to prevent.

20...Kg8 21 a3

Boris: Getting ready to expand on the queenside.

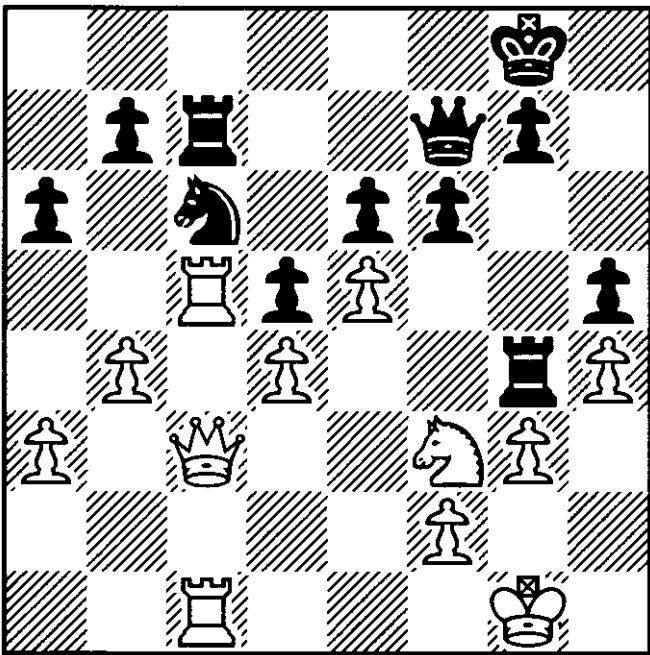
21...f6 22 Nc5 Bxc5 23 Rxc5 Qf7!

Joel: Why is this such a good move?

Boris: Because the queen is headed to g6, the only place Black can get a breath of fresh air and threaten to generate counterplay.

24 b4 a6 25 Qc3?!

Boris: My last move allowed Black to escape his difficulties. 25 Kg2 was better, simply improving my position.



Exercise: What is a tactical way for Black to avoid the difficulties of his position? (difficulty level 4)

25...Rd7?

Boris: White's plan is a3-a4 and b4-b5. It is typical of Karpov to avoid threats be-

fore they arise, but in here he could have played 25...Qg6! 26 a4 b6!! 27 Rxc6 Rxc6 28 Qxc6 Rxc3+ with a perpetual check, but he failed to see it over the board.

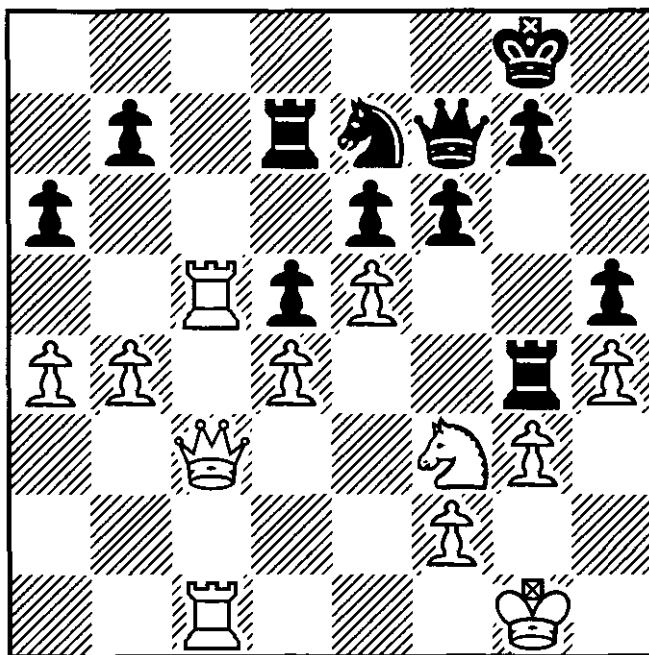
Joel: Perhaps this was due to playing up until now in such an oppressive position? It looks like you won the psychological and strategic war. Was he broken and this subsequently prevented him from seeing his opportunity? There is interesting research on this issue, showing that depressed patients are more realistic in their judgments about the probability of winning chance games than their non-depressed, overly optimistic counterparts. They call it depressive realism.

Boris: Yes, a very interesting observation and maybe that is what happened in the game.

26 a4 Ne7?!

Joel: But this appears to be a strong prophylactic move, taking the sting out of b5 so that it does not come with gain of time. The knight on e7 also controls the c8-square, preventing White from infiltrating on the back rank. Black would welcome a trade of his passive rook on d7 with your active rook on c3. Why do you consider it dubious?

Boris: Karpov always plays against the next move, which he believed to be b4-b5, but here I had something stronger, something that saps the energy from the g4-rook.



Exercise: How can White accomplish this? (difficulty level 3)

27 Nh2!

Boris: Now the rook will be poorly placed and is running out of good squares. My

opponent is deprived of any counterplay because that was entirely connected to the activity of his rook on g4. Strategically the game is won. Now White must complete his strategic victory by tactical means.

27...Rg6

Boris: 27...Re4? would be a mistake because of 28 f3 Re2 29 Qd3 Ra2 30 Rc8+.

28 Qd3

Joel: What is the idea behind this move?

Boris: It's a prophylactic move, giving the rook room to retreat. Had I played 28 b5?! axb5 29 axb5 fxe5 30 dxe5 b6 I would have been forced to exchange my active rook for his passive rook with 31 Rc7, which would have allowed Black to get active following 31...Rxc7 32 Qxc7 Qf4!.

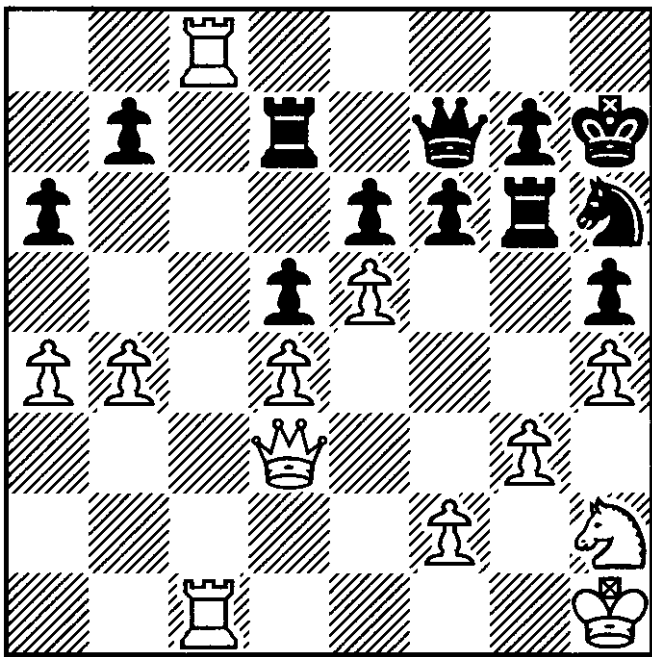
28...Nf5

Boris: Black's only hope is counterplay on the kingside.

29 Rc8+ Kh7 30 Kh1

Boris: Prophylaxis again. I have a huge strategic advantage so I make a safe move, but maybe it was too slow because Black could now return with 30...Ne7!. However, Black was in severe time shortage at this moment, having only 3 or 4 minutes left to reach the time control, whereas I had about half an hour or so.

30...Nh6?



Exercise: What should White do now? (difficulty level 2)

31 R1c2?

Boris: Here the sudden 31 g4! wins on the spot. If 31...hxc4 32 h5 or 31...Nxc4 32 Nxc4 hxc4 33 h5 wins the rook. Therefore 31...f5 was forced, but after 32 g5 Ng4 33 Kg2 the rook on g6 is trapped. He is essentially a rook down.

Joel: How would you execute that win?

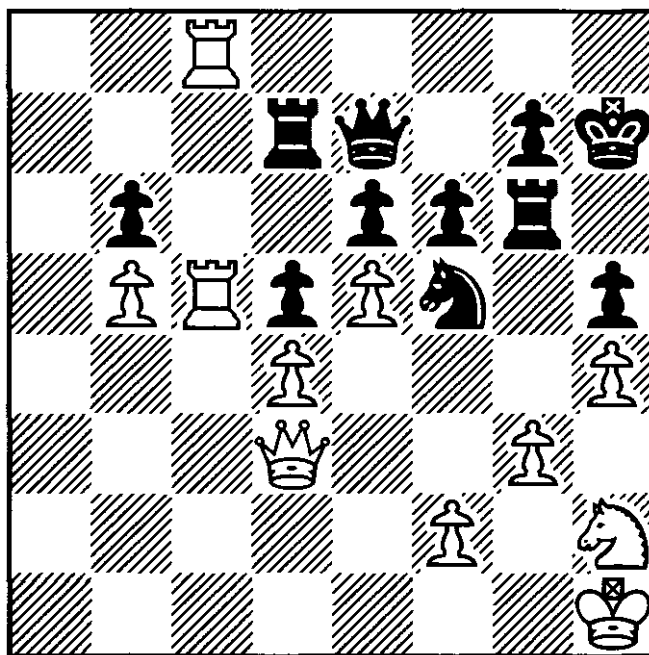
Boris: I would play f2-f3, exchange off his knight, play R1c3, Qc2 (to take full control of the c-file) and then Rc7, exchanging off all of his pieces except the rook on g6.

31...Nf5 32 b5

Boris: Depriving Black of the c6-square.

32...axb5 33 axb5 Qe7 34 R2c5

Boris: There was a shorter way in 34 Nf3!? Rg4 35 Re2!, when the e6-pawn would be defenseless. But I took the advice that Capablanca gave Botvinnik: *don't hurry in a better position; just keep the position and your opponent will lose the game himself*. The point of 34 R2c5 is to prevent Karpov's idea of ...Qb4.

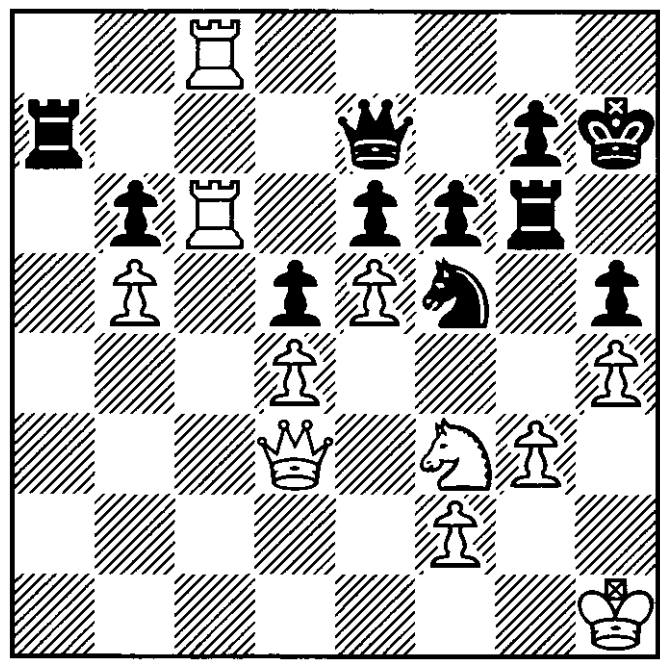
34...b6

Joel: Why did Karpov play this move?

Boris: He can't wait anymore or he will suffocate. Black has run out of useful moves. In a bad position it is imperative that you create a mess, create complica-

tions, even if they are not sound. This is better than a quiet death. Karpov understands this better than almost anyone, having been on the other side of the death squeeze so often.

35 R5c6 Ra7 36 Nf3



Boris: This frees the queen from the defense of d4 and gives my king room in case of ...Ra1+.

36...Ra3

Joel: His pieces have become very active. My attention seems to be shifting to his possibilities as opposed to yours.

Boris: After a strategic victory you have to find the correct tactical solution and always be on the look-out for combinations. Here Karpov didn't have time to calculate, but still he played in a way that made it most complicated for me. Exchanging queens would lead to a hopeless ending in which the imprisonment of Black's rook on the g-file would decide the game: 36...Qa3!? 37 Qxa3 Rxa3 38 Kg2 Ne7 (or 38...Rxf3 39 Kxf3 Nxd4+ 40 Kg2 Nxc6 41 bxc6 Rg4 42 f4) 39 Rc3 Ra2 40 Rc2! Rxc2 (or 40...Ra5 41 Re8 Nf5 42 Rcc8) 41 Rxc2 Rg4 42 Rc6! and White wins.

37 Qd1

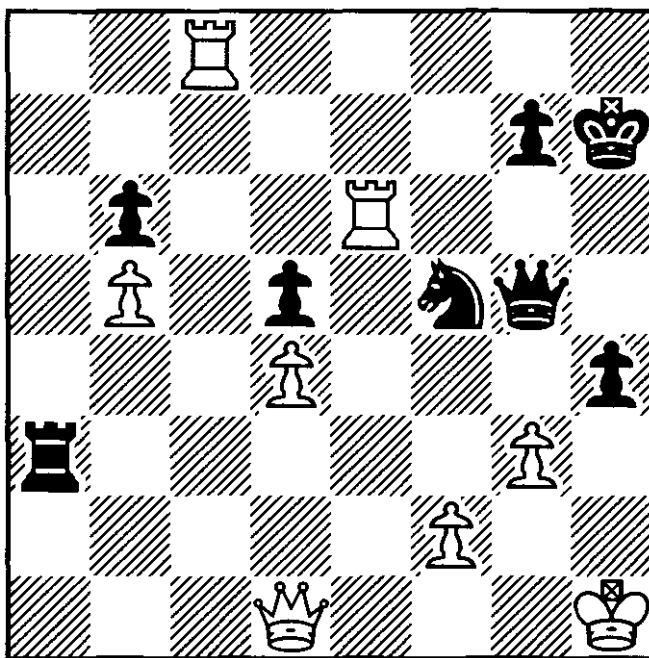
Boris: Threatening to discover an attack on the h5-pawn, which Karpov prevents.

37...Rg4 38 exf6

Boris: At this point in the game I was running low on time, too, and didn't have

time to calculate. So I played in the safest way, but 38 R6c7! wins instantly; for example, 38 R6c7! Qb4 39 exf6 and Black's kingside is crumbling. One humorous finish might be 39...Qb2 40 Ng5+! Kg6 41 f7 Qxf2 42 f8N+ Kh6 43 Nf7 mate.

38...Qxf6 39 Ng5+ Rxc5 40 hxc5 Qxc5 41 Rxe6 h4



Exercise: Find the winning combination for White. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: With rook, knight, and queen all staring at your king, and the h-pawn ready to pry open the kingside, I'm getting pretty nervous. Although your major pieces are nicely posted, there doesn't appear to be an obvious attack.

Boris: You are absolutely correct. If at this point I start to defend as you imply, I would lose instantly. Instead, I start my mating attack. My threats are more serious than his, but it requires concrete calculation.

42 Ree8!

Boris: Trying to keep the kingside closed – in other words, defending – loses: 42 g4? Qf4 and Black's threat of ...Rh3+ cannot be stopped.

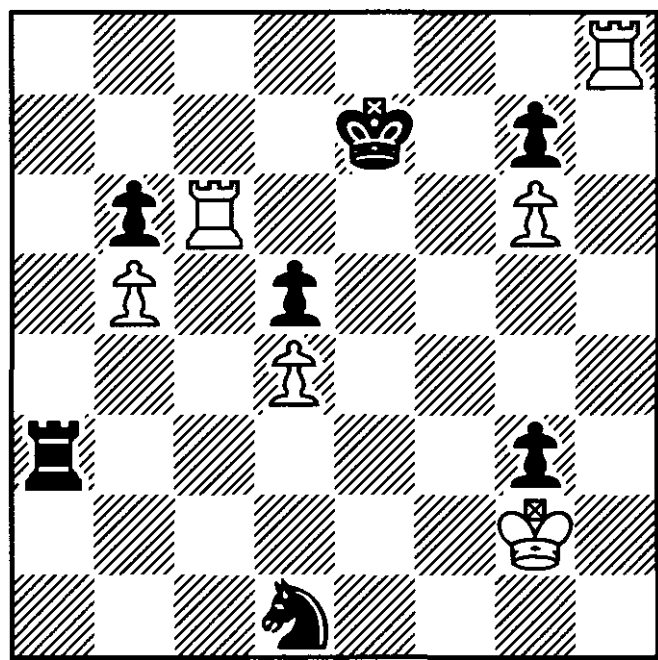
Joel: How easy it is for the game to change. One slip and all of your hard work is thrown away.

Boris: You must remain vigilant until the end. If your opponent has the will to struggle, he will complicate the position and you must refute him tactically, which your superior position (assuming you are winning) will allow you to do.

42...hxg3 43 Rh8+ Kg6 44 f4! Ne3 45 Rc6+ Kf7

Boris: 45...Kf5 would lead to the loss of the queen, e.g. 46 Rf8+ Ke4 47 Qb1+. During the post mortem, Karpov said: “but you would have had 47 Re6+ and mate is much, much better than winning the queen.”

46 fxg5 Nxd1 47 g6+! Ke7 48 Kg2!



Boris: With my 42nd move I calculated until this point. This move activates my king for the ensuing endgame. Here I am prepared to walk my king up the center of the board, not afraid of any discovered checks. While 48 Rg8?! is probably still winning, e.g. 48...Ne3 49 Rxg7+ Kd8 50 Rc1, something as innocent as 50 Rgc7? Ra2 would demand that White then finds 51 Rc2!! Nxc2 52 Rxc2! and wins.

48...Ne3+ 49 Kxg3 Nf5+ 50 Kf4 Nxd4 51 Rxb6 Ne6+ 52 Ke5 Re3+ 53 Kxd5 Re1 54 Rxe6+ 1-0

Boris: Transposing to a winning king and pawn endgame after 54...Rxe6 55 Re8+ Kxe8 56 Kxe6.

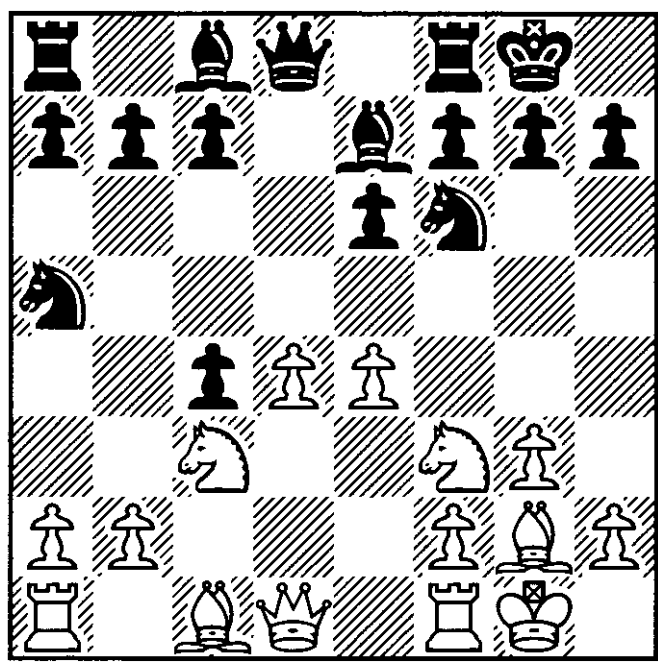
Joel: I have taken a number of important themes from this great game. First, it demonstrated the importance of preventing your opponent’s plan; e.g. 14 Bd2 prevented 14...Bb4 because 15 Nb5 would follow. Second, the game showed the importance of piece coordination. Essentially, the entire strategy of the game was based on disrupting the communication of Karpov’s rooks, which allowed White

to dominate the c-file. Third, the game also demonstrated the necessity of following a strategic victory with tactics. I was impressed with how tactically alert you had to be up until the very end. Fourth, it illustrated the importance of not rushing in a winning position. Inevitably, the player in the losing position will self-destruct, allowing for a quick tactical finish. This again stresses the importance of remaining tactically vigilant at all times.

Perhaps one of the more subtle points I took away from this game was that all rules are relative. I have heard this before, of course, but to see it applied was highly instructive. In this game, which featured a closed position, all knights were not better than all bishops, but the knight on g1 was better than the bishop on f5.

Game Twenty-Three
B.Gulko-B.Gelfand
Amsterdam 1988
Catalan Opening

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 Nc3 Be7 4 Nf3 Nf6 5 g3 0-0 6 Bg2 dxc4 7 0-0!? Nc6 8 e3 Na5!? 9 e4!



Boris: The day after this game I had a walk with Korchnoi and he asked me whether it was true that I played e2-e3 and then on the next move e3-e4. I said yes and reminded him that he did the same against Gipslis in 1966. It is unusual, but in some situations it is appropriate.

Joel: Why is it appropriate?

Boris: After 8...Na5 he intends to play ...c7-c5. Also, having removed his knight from c6, it no longer has any influence on the center squares. In order to fight for the initiative White has to play actively in the center. We can't follow rules strictly. There are too many rules and sometimes they contradict each other. Only after we find the right way can we formulate which rule was correct.

Joel: I think that is the biggest lesson from the book, in my opinion. I think the biggest difference between weak and strong players is their ability to apply rules in a

flexible way. In each game in this book I think you violate some general rule because of the positional demands on the board.

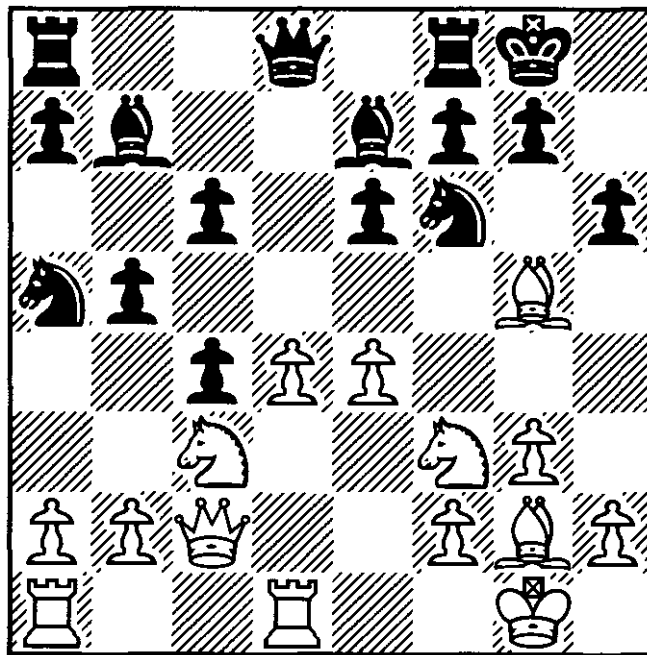
Boris: Right, that's my point. Try to be flexible. Part of positional play is to find the element of the position that makes it unique and determines how to proceed. If you are able to identify this aspect of the position then you will be able to apply the "rules" of chess in a flexible way. Very often rules that apply to one position do not apply to a similar position.

9...c6

Boris: After 9...c5 White has the typical 10 d5 exd5 11 e5 with chances for the initiative.

10 Qc2 b5 11 Rd1 Bb7 12 Bg5! h6?!

Boris: It was better to play 12...Nd7!.



Exercise: What to play for White? (difficulty level 5)

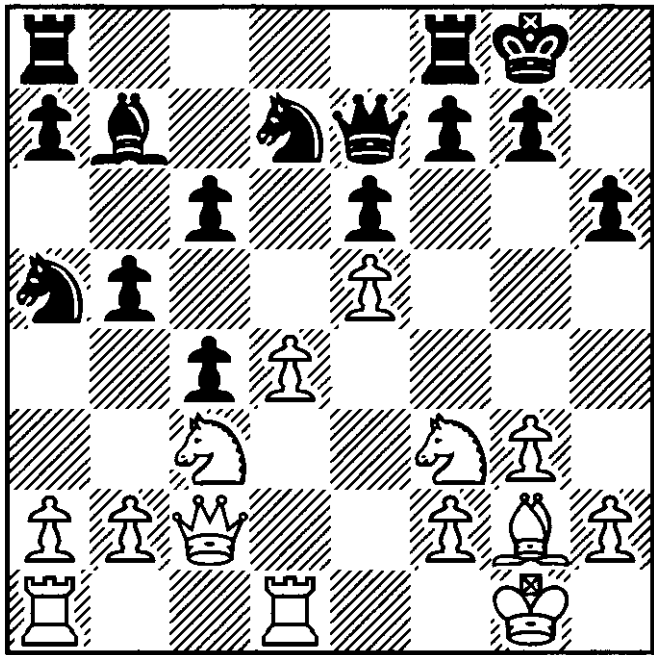
Joel: I first looked at 13 e5, but after 13...hxg5 14 exf6 Bxf6 White is down two pawns, has a weak isolated d-pawn, and has lost the important possibility of playing e4-e5. I am thinking instead that 13 Bxf6 is maybe the way to go, followed by 14 e5 with the idea of playing Ne4.

Boris: Your suggestion doesn't promise anything for White, but Gelfand too didn't foresee my idea in the actual game.

13 e5! Nd7

Boris: Black reasonably avoids 13...hxg5? 14 Nxg5 (you're right that 14 exf6 Bxf6 is bad for White) 14...g6 15 exf6 Bxf6 16 h4! Bxg5 17 hxg5 Qxg5 18 Ne4 and Black's position is very dangerous because of the misplaced knight on a5 and the weakened dark squares around the king; The natural 13...Nd5? would leave the c5-square unprotected and White would be much better after 14 Bxe7 Qxe7 15 Ne4.

14 Bxe7 Qxe7



Exercise: Try to find the main drawback in Black's position.
What to play? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: The main drawback in Black's position is the weakness of the d6-square so I would play 15 Ne4, heading to d6.

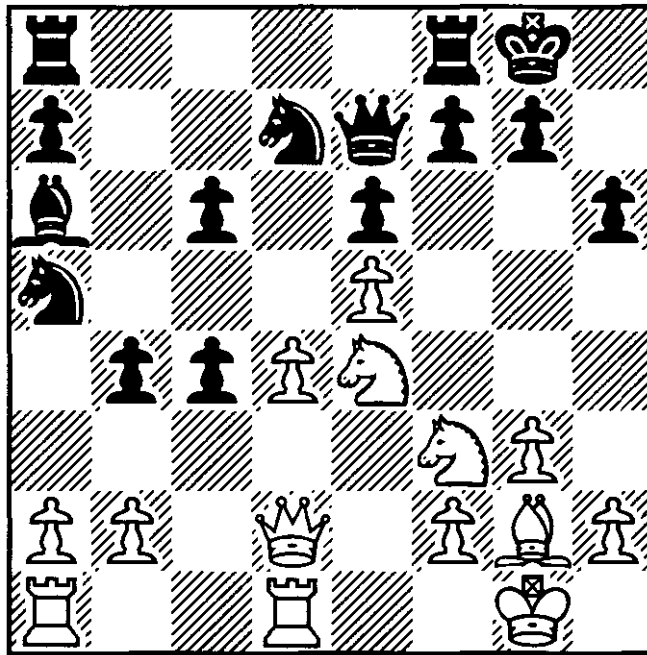
Boris: The main idea for Black is to play ...c6-c5, which would solve all his problems. However, White can use the main drawback of Black's position (the poor placement of the knight on a5) to prevent this plan. It is this aspect of the position that is unique and, therefore, White should not apply rules in a general way but in a specific way, adapting to the positional demands on the board.

15 Qd2!

Boris: The natural 15 Ne4? that you suggested allows 15...c5, giving Black a good game.

15...b4

Boris: Unsatisfied with the development of the game, Black tries for complications. The quiet 15...Qd8!? would permit White to prevent ...c6-c5 by 16 Qe3!, after which the invasion of the c3-knight via e4 on Black's weak dark squares would give White a tremendous position. Again not 16 Ne4 because Black has 16...c5. Your idea of Nc3-e4 is right, but only after White has prevented Black's counterplay with ...c6-c5.

16 Ne4 Ba6

Exercise: Find a tactical solution for White. Calculate variations. (difficulty level 5)

Joel: Unfortunately, I don't understand Black's last move. Since I don't understand his threat it is hard to find a tactical solution. A tactical solution to what? My first thought is that Black is threatening 17...c3 with the idea of ...Nc4-b6-d5, but this seems to just lose a pawn and leave the pawn on c6 dreadfully weak. I don't see any other immediate threat, so I would just play 17 Nd6.

Boris: It is a really intricate position. White has a tactical way to reach an advantage. The move you offered is not bad, but Black could play 17...Rab8 with a reasonable position. The position in the diagram allows White to initiate a very complicated combination, which is very difficult to calculate until the end. In such situations, when you cannot calculate to the end, you have to trust your intuition.

17 Nc5! c3

Boris: Gelfand avoided the main line of the combination which was 17...Nxc5 18 Qxb4! Nab7 19 Nd2! Rfe8 (19...Rab8 20 Ne4 is in White's favor) 20 Bxc6! Nd3 (20...Rec8 21 Bg2 Qc7 22 dxc5 Qxc5 23 Qc3 is very good for White) 21 Qa4! Nxb2 22 Qxa6 Nxd1 23 Rxd1 c3 (23...Reb8 24 Nxc4 and Black is completely paralyzed) 24 Ne4 c2 25 Rc1 and White has a big advantage.

Joel: Did you calculate all that during the game?

Boris: Not completely; but as I said, when you see such an opportunity you have to use your intuition.

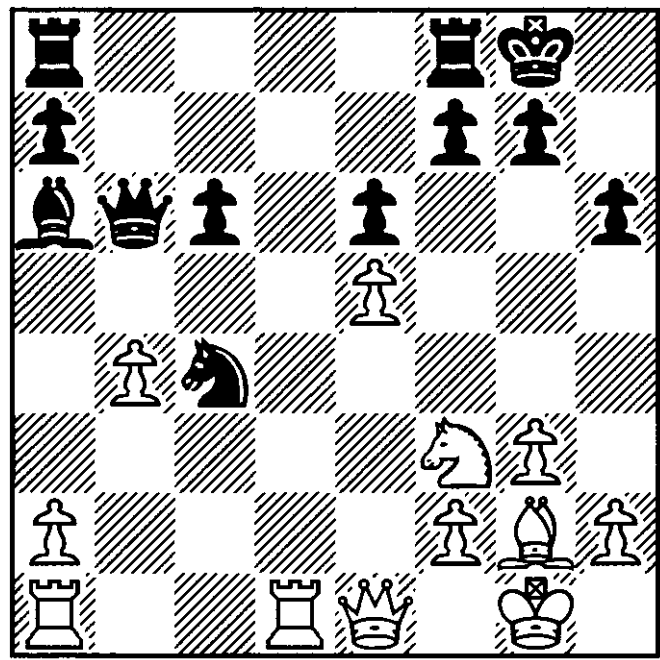
Joel: How much of that did you calculate?

Boris: I can't remember; it was 22 years ago. But in general you have to calculate until you can estimate the outcome.

18 bxc3 Nc4 19 Qe1 Nxc5 20 dxc5 Qxc5

Boris: In the case of 20...Nb2, I planned 21 cxb4 (the immediate 21 Rd6 was good as well) 21...Nxd1 22 Rxd1 and, after the inevitable Rd6 and Nd4, Black would lose the c6-pawn and find himself in a dangerous position. 20...bxc3 21 Qxc3 Qxc5 22 Bf1! was also bad for Black because he cannot unpin his knight.

21 cxb4 Qb6



Exercise: Find the drawback in Black's position. What to play? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: The drawback in Black's position is the c6-pawn. Winning this pawn would

give White a winning queenside majority. It seems to me that 22 Qc3 is a natural move, with the idea of playing Nf3-d4 and Rac1.

Boris: You are partly correct. The main problem for Black is the vulnerable position of his knight on c4 so, after the move you offer, Black is in big trouble because he cannot safely protect the knight.

Joel: So it is not about the c6-pawn?

Boris: No, but your intuition led you to the right move.

Joel: That is very kind of you.

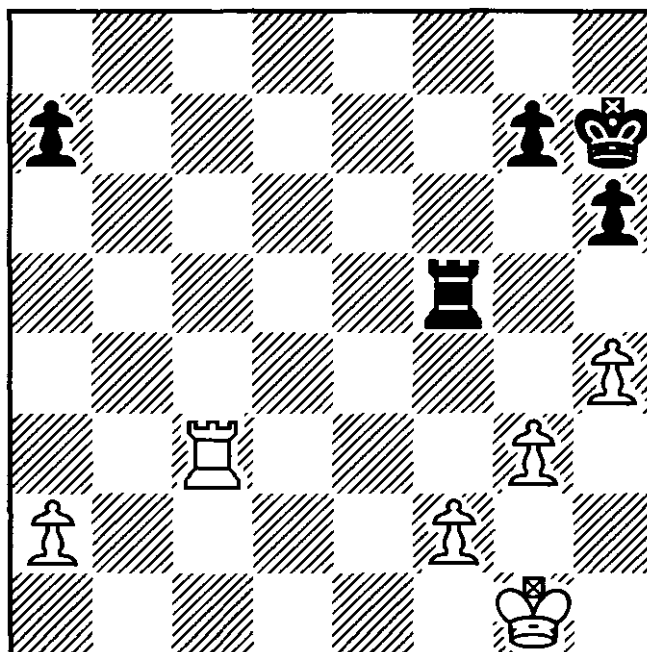
22 Qc3! f6!?

Boris: Black played the most stubborn defense, transposing the position to an endgame a pawn down but with drawing chances. Solving the problem of the c6-pawn by playing 22...c5 would lose because of the unfortunate knight on c4: 23 Rdb1! (the knight on c4 is condemned) 23...cxb4 24 Rxb4 Qc5 25 Nd2 Rac8 26 Nxc4 Bxc4 27 Rc1.

23 exf6 Rxf6 24 Rd4 Raf8 25 Rxc4

Boris: The simplest solution. After 25 Rad1 c5 26 Rxc4 Bxc4 27 Qxc4 Qxb4 the position is more difficult to evaluate.

25...Bxc4 26 Qxc4 Rxf3 27 Bxf3 Rxf3 28 Qxe6+ Rf7 29 Qe1 c5 30 bxc5 Qxc5 31 Rc1 Qd5 32 Qe2 Kh7 33 Rc3 Qf5 34 h4 Rb7 35 Qd3 Rb5 36 Qxf5+ Rxf5



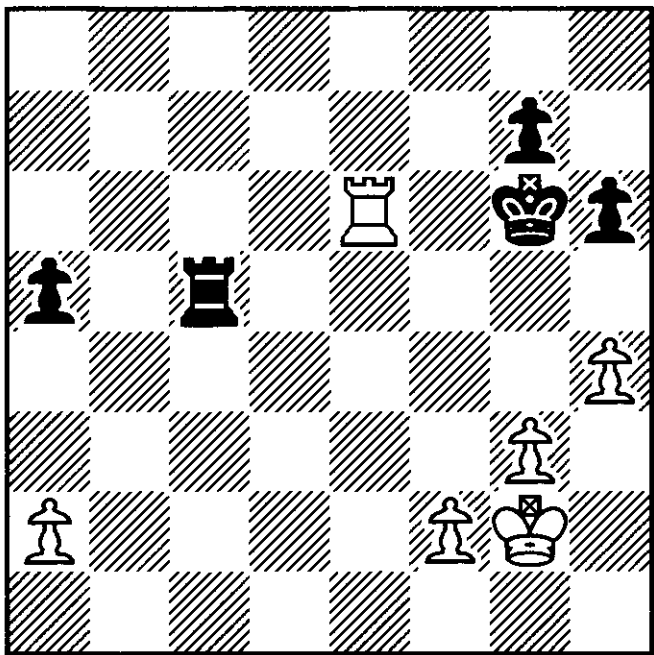
Exercise: What is White's best way forward? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I would play 37 a4 with the idea of putting my rook behind the a-pawn and simultaneously protecting my kingside pawns.

37 Ra3!

Boris: The rook endgame which arises has to be winning because pawns are on both sides of the board, but it is not easy. For White, it is important to keep his rook in the most active position. In the case of 37 Kg2?! Ra5 White's rook would be burdened by having to protect the a-pawn. After the game continuation, this burden falls on Black. Your suggestion is wrong. The rook only has to be behind the pawn when it is a passed pawn. After 37 a4 Ra5 38 Ra3 Rc5 39 Kg2 a5 40 Kf3 Rc4 the white rook cannot leave its prison on a3 and the position has become drawish.

37...a5 38 Kf1 Re5 39 Kg2 Kg6 40 Re3 Rc5 41 Re6+



Exercise: What does Black have to play? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: My intuition tells me 41...Kf7, but it is hard to see what is wrong with 41...Kf5, which is the natural move.

Boris: Your feeling was correct. It is rare in the endgame when moving your king towards the center is a mistake.

41...Kf7!

Boris: After 41...Kf5 42 Ra6 h5 43 a3! g6 44 Kf1 Re5 45 a4 Rc5 46 Ke2 Black's king cannot move because he has to defend g6. If Black tries 46...g5 White will win with

47 Rh6 Kg4 48 Rg6. Black has to wait, so White will bring his king to d4 or his rook to b5 and win a second pawn.

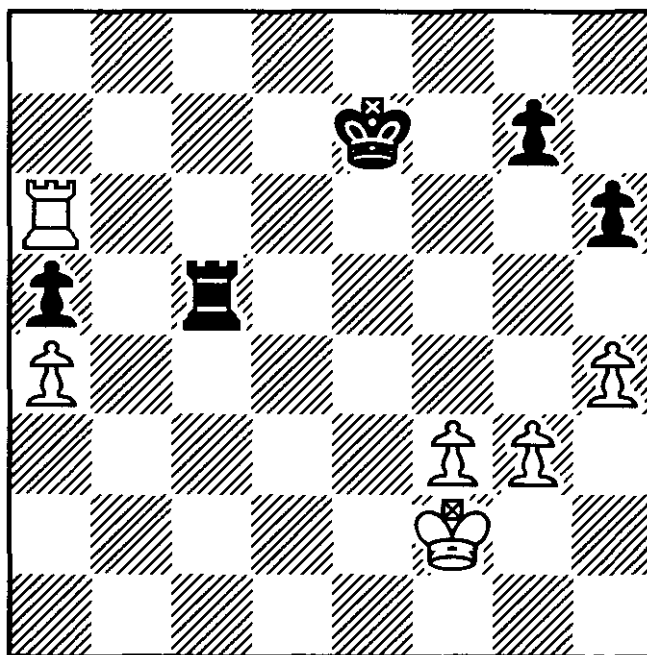
Joel: How does bringing the king to d4 win a second pawn?

Boris: Because Black's rook runs out of squares and must abandon the protection of his a5-pawn. For example, if in this position the white king were on d4, Black's only move to continue protecting a5 would be ...Re5 which allows White to play Rxg6!.

42 Ra6

Boris: As I mentioned in my comments to move 37, it is now Black's rook that is passively protecting his pawn, whereas White's rook is active. Nevertheless, Black still has chances for defense. The game is not over!

42...Ke7 43 a4 Rf5 44 f3 Rc5 45 Kf2



Joel: Why not 45...Rc2+ now? Can you say something about how to play these positions? It seems to me that I am often quite afraid of Black getting counterplay against my kingside pawns if I go over to the queenside to assist in promoting the a-pawn.

Boris: In the endgame we have to calculate much more accurately than in the middlegame, where you can trust your intuition. Here we have to calculate until we reach a clear conclusion.

45...Re5!

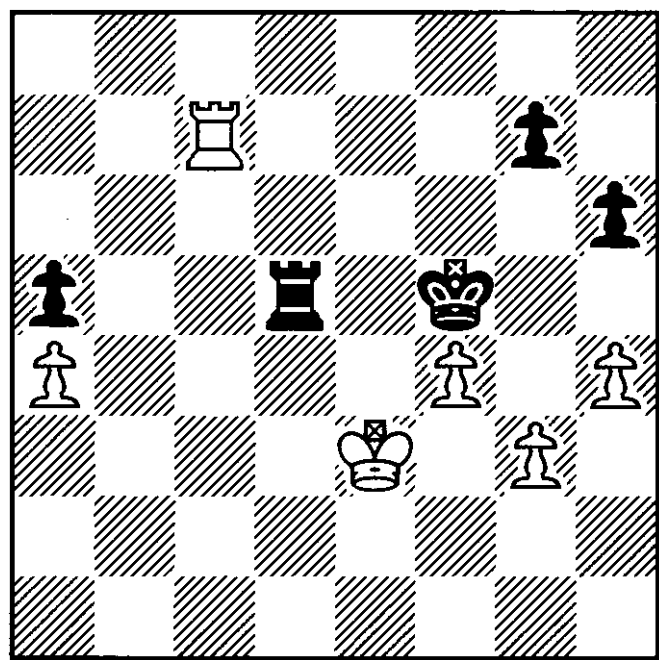
Boris: Against the move you offered, 45...Rc2+, White plays 46 Ke3 Rc3+ 47 Ke2! Rc2+ 48 Kd3 Rf2 49 Ke3 and Black loses the a-pawn.

46 Rc6

Boris: Black defends cleverly. White cannot activate his king without removing the rook from its active post on a6.

46...Kf7 47 Rc4 Kf6 48 Re4?

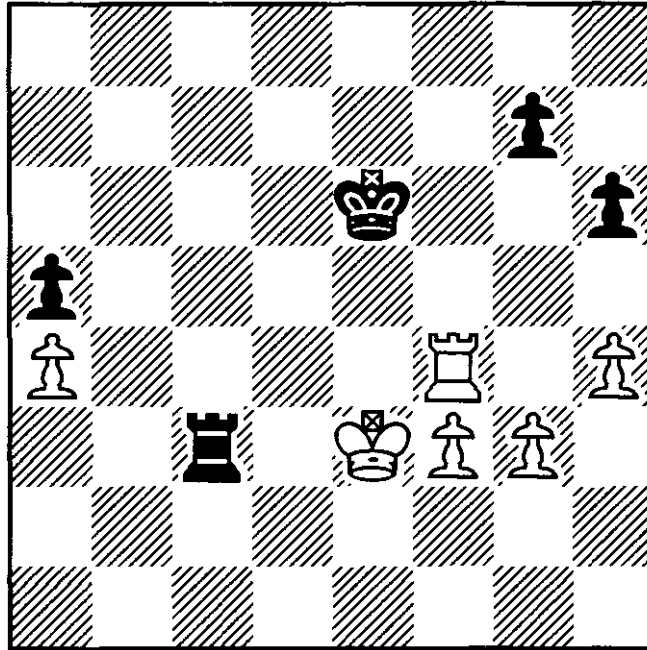
Boris: White continues maneuvering and misses a direct win. White had to start using his extra pawn on the kingside with 48 f4! Rd5 49 Ke3 Kf5 50 Rc7 and then:



- a) 50...g5 51 hxg5 hxg5 52 fxg5 Kxg5 (or 52...Re5+ 53 Kd3 Kxg5 54 Kd4 would lose as well) 53 Ke4 Rd1 54 Rc5+ Kg4 55 Rxa5 Kxg3 56 Rc5 and Black is losing because his king is cut off and cannot assist in preventing White's a-pawn from queening.
- b) The other line 50...g6 51 Rf7+ Ke6 (51...Kg4 52 Rf6 Kxg3 53 Rxc6+ Kxh4 54 Rxh6+ Kg4 55 Rg6+ Kh5 56 Rg8 with an easy win) 52 Rh7 h5 53 Rc7 Kf5 54 Rc6 is winning for the same reasons 41...Kf5 was losing in the previous exercise: Black's king cannot move and the rook cannot stay on the fifth rank.

48...Rc5 49 Rf4+ Ke6 50 Ke3 Rc3+?

Boris: This is a mistake. The correct 50...g5! would give Black the chance to fight for a draw.



Exercise: Where does the white king have to go? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: White's rook is perfectly placed. I would like to bring my king over to the queenside to win the a5-pawn and escort the a-pawn home. If 51 Kd4 Ra3 52 Kc5 Rb3 and it is not clear to me how to make progress. However, 51 Kd2! creates problems for Black. If 51...Ra3 52 Kc2 the black rook runs out of squares, and if 52...Re3 53 Re4+ leads to a winning king and pawn endgame. Also, playing 51 Kd2 and approaching the queenside via the second rank will take away the a1-a3 squares from Black's rook, which means he will have to give way and White will be able to approach the a5-pawn.

Boris: Very good! Your variation is not precise but your feeling for the position helped you find the right move. The main factor in this situation is the position of the white rook on f4.

51 Kd2!

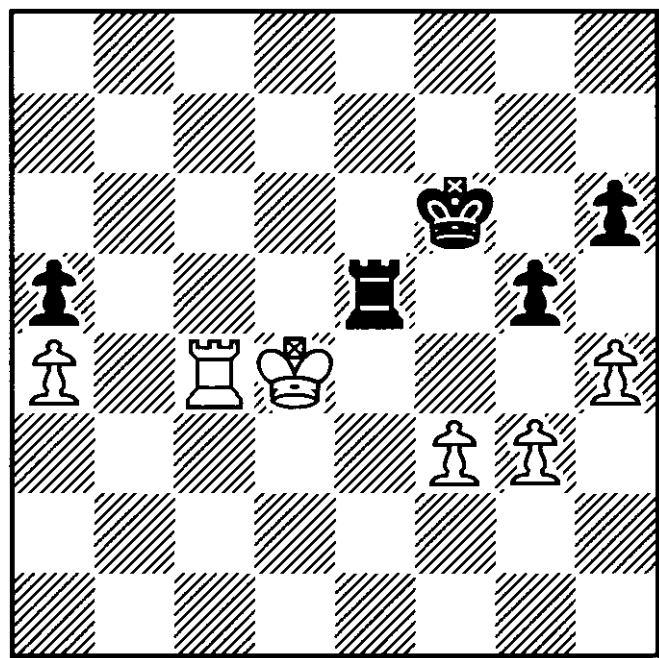
Boris: Again, the right way in this position is not to move the king toward the center. In the case of 51 Kd4 Ra3 52 Kc5 then 52...g5! would give Black drawing chances. Your suggestion 52...Rb3 would give White a winning position after 53 h5!.

51...Rc5

Boris: Here Gelfand realized that 51...Ra3 52 h5! (preserving the safety of the rook on f4) 52...Ke5 53 Kc2 Ke6 54 g4! Ke7 (it is important to know the type of position

that arises after 54...Ke5 55 Rf5+ Kd4 56 Rxa5 Rxf3 57 Ra6 and White wins simply by moving the rook to g6, where it will support his own pawns on g4 and eventually a6 and attacks g7) 55 Kb2 Rd3 56 Rf5 Ke8 (or 56...Ke6 57 Rxa5 Rxf3 58 Ra6+ and again the rook goes to g6 with an easy win) 57 f4 Rg3 58 g5 winning a second pawn.

52 Kd3 g5 53 Re4+ Kf6 54 Rc4 Rd5+ 55 Ke4 Re5+ 56 Kd4



56...Re6

Boris: Black's rook has to leave the fifth rank which means the end of resistance. Black doesn't have 56...gxh4 because of 57 Rc6+ Kf5 58 g4+ winning the rook.

57 hxg5+ hxg5 58 Rc5 Rb6 59 Rb5

Boris: It looks like I didn't want to finish a well played game. Of course 59 Rxa5 was possible.

59...Rd6+ 60 Rd5 Rb6 61 Rb5?! Ra6 62 Kc5 Kf5 63 Rb6 Ra8 64 g4+ Kf4 65 Rf6+ Kg3 66 Kb5 Kf2 67 Rf5 1-0

Joel: What jumps out at me again is the flexible use of rules. Also, I liked very much the idea that you have to calculate more accurately in the endgame. I really noticed how inaccurately I calculate concrete variations.

Boris: Yes, developing your ability to calculate will of course improve your chess considerably. The first part of this game illustrates the rule of Tarrasch: *if one piece*

is badly placed (in this case the knight on a5) *the whole game is bad*. Using the bad position of the black knight, White was able to prevent ...c6-c5. Trying to overcome his problems, Gelfand wisely transposed to an endgame a pawn down. Here I had to concern myself with the activity of my rook. Because of my 37th move, White was able to have an active rook. What was unusual for this endgame were the two instances in which moving the king towards the center would have been a mistake. For studying the endgame, it is very important to remember the position that could have arisen if Gelfand had played 51...Ra3, when White's rook would have performed triple duty on g6 (defending two of my pawns and attacking one of his).

Game Twenty-Four
B.Gulko-B.Larsen
Hastings 1988/89
Catalan Opening

Boris: Larsen was one of my favorite players. He was very interesting strategically and was usually able to find, during the game, ways to create tremendous pressure. This game was typical for him.

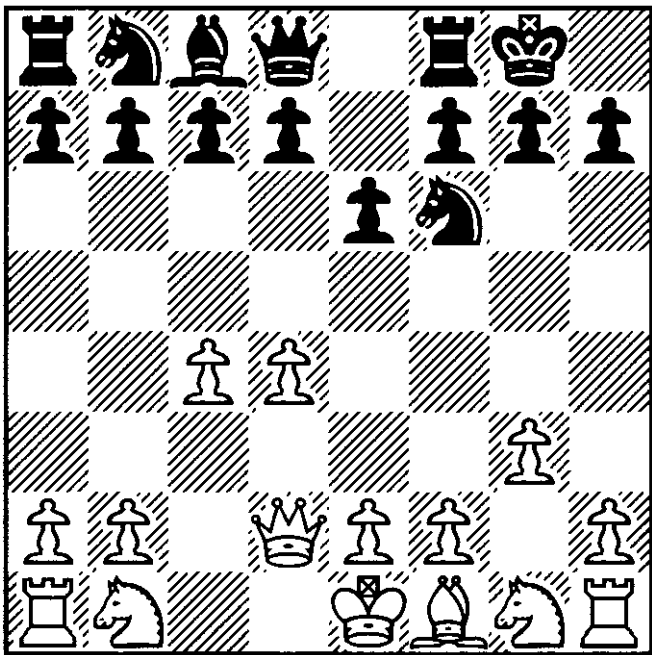
Joel: What was his reputation as a player during his best years.

Boris: He played first board and Fischer second board in the USSR vs. The World match in 1970, which gives you a sense of his playing strength and what his peers thought of him. He lost some of his self-confidence after his match with Fischer (in 1971) when he lost 6-0. For someone who thrived in complicated and unusual positions, you have to be very self-confident.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 Bb4+ 4 Bd2 Bxd2+

Boris: Larsen prepared an unusual strategic set-up for this tournament. Usually in this opening Black plays 4...Qe7 5 Nf3 Nc6 6 Bg2 Bxd2+ 7 Nbx d2 d6 8 O-O e5 9 d5, when his knight has to return to b8. In the variation Larsen prepared, the e7-square is available to the knight.

5 Qxd2 O-O

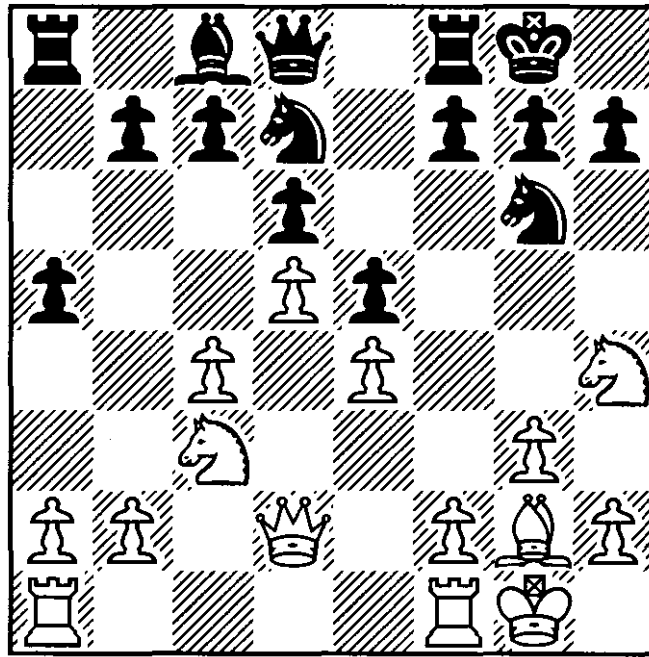


6 Bg2

Boris: I decided to try Larsen's set-up some years later but my opponent demonstrated that, playing cleverly, White can prevent it: 6 Nf3 d6 7 Nc3 Nc6 8 Rd1 and the move ...e6-e5 is impossible because of the pin on the d-file, A.Chernin-B.Gulko, Beersheba 1993.

6 d6 7 Nf3 Nc6 8 d5 Ne7 9 Nc3 e5 10 0-0 a5 11 e4 Nd7 12 Nh4 Ng6

Boris: Worse was 12...Nc5 13 f4 when White starts to push on the kingside.

**13 Nxg6!?**

Boris: Keeping pieces on the board with 13 Nf5!? Nc5 14 Ne3 was also possible. In the game, I preferred to compromise Black's kingside pawn structure.

Joel: How did you plan to use this imbalance?

Boris: The two moves we are considering have different strengths and weaknesses. I chose to compromise his kingside pawn formation, but when you have more space keeping the pieces on the board also has merit.

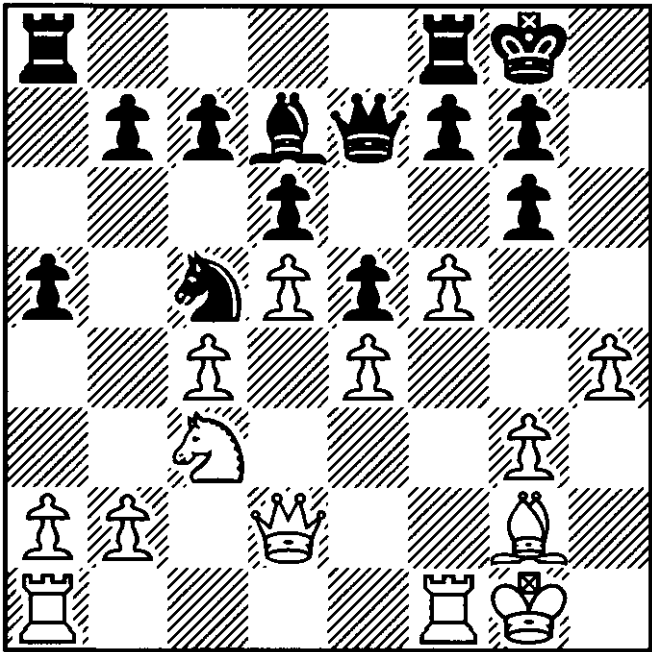
Joel: What was your plan though? I mean, you made a decision, and I am sure you had a plan associated with your decision.

Boris: After taking on g6, I made his kingside more vulnerable to attack by pushing my f-pawn. In this case, the g6-pawn is the hook for White's kingside pawn storm, which will be seen in the game.

13...hxg6 14 f4 Nc5 15 f5 Bd7!?

Boris: This move is better than 15...g5?! 16 Rf2 Bd7 17 Raf1 f6 18 Bf3 Be8 19 h4 gxh4 20 gxh4 and White is ready to attack on the g-file. Larsen's decision is typical for him. By not clarifying the position he makes it more difficult to develop a plan of attack.

16 h4! Qe7



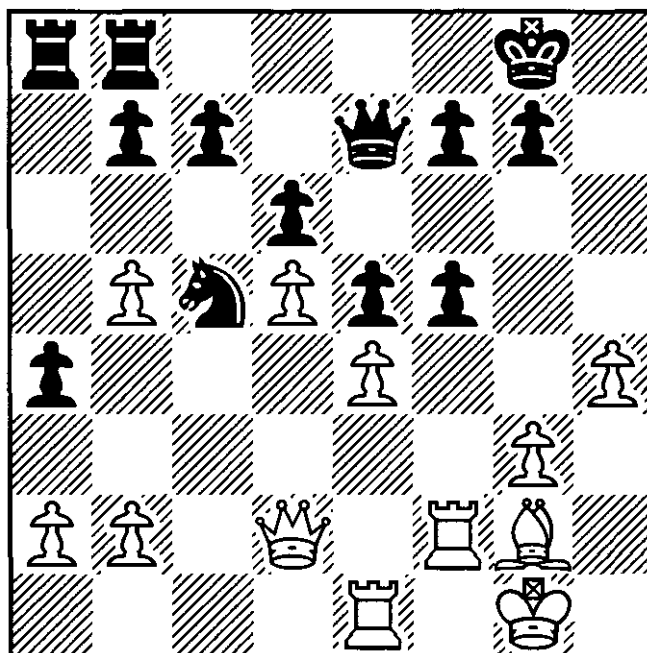
17 Rae1?!

Boris: An unnecessary prophylactic. I tried to avoid 17 Rf2! gxh4 18 exf5 e4 19 Re1 Qf6 20 Nxe4 Nxe4 21 Rxe4 Rfe8, considering that Black has good compensation for the pawn, but after 22 Qg5! Rxe4 23 Bxe4 Qe5 24 f6! White would be much better. So the move 17 Rae1 loses an important tempo.

17...Rfb8! 18 Nb5!

Boris: After wasting a tempo on move 17, White is not happy with 18 Rf2 b5! 19 fxg6 fxg6 20 cxb5 Bxb5 21 Nxb5 Rxb5 22 Ref1 a4, when Black has clear counterplay against the b2-pawn. With the game continuation White prevents Black's counterplay with ...b7-b5, but at the cost of creating a target of attack for Black on b5.

18...Bxb5 19 cxb5 a4 20 Rf2 gxf5



21 Rxf5!?

Boris: Again, I have to make a difficult choice, but the game continuation offers White more chances than 21 exf5 Qf6! (Black would be mated after 21...e4 22 f6 Qe5 23 g4 gxf6 24 Rf5 Qg3 25 Qh6! Qxe1+ 26 Kh2 and Black doesn't have a defense against 27 Rh5 with mate to follow) 22 Kh2 Kh7! (too passive was 22...Re8 23 Be4 and White's g-pawn will soon march forward) 23 Kh3 Rh8 24 g4 Kg8 25 g5 Qe7 26 f6 Qd7+ 27 Kg3 g6 28 Bf1 Re8 and Black's prospects are even preferable after ...e5-e4 and ...Re8-e5.

21...Rf8

Boris: Here Larsen had to make a difficult decision regarding the type of pawn structure he wanted on the kingside. It looks like he already decided to push the f-pawn, but perhaps 21...g6! was better.

Joel: Why?

Boris: Because the light squares around Black's king become too weak after ...f7-f6, which gives White dangerous opportunities for attack. The move 21...g6 did not have this drawback.

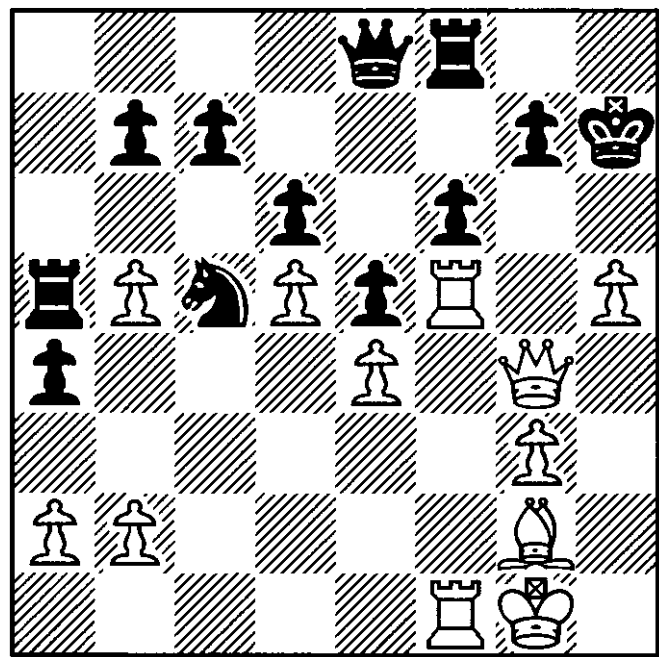
22 Ref1 f6?!

Boris: Here 22...g6!? was still preferable. Having pawns on the light squares would have restricted the prospects of White's light-squared bishop.

23 h5! Qe8 24 Qe2!

Boris: Too timid was 24 Qb4!? b6 25 R1f3 Ra5 26 Bf1 Kh7 and Black builds a safe fortress. Instead, White sacrificed a pawn and started to attack.

24...Ra5 25 Qg4 Kh7



Exercise: How does White develop the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: White has more pieces on the kingside and, therefore, should play on that side where the imbalances favor him. The most obvious way to do that is with 26 h6. Then, since White threatens mate, Black has two options: 26...gxh6 27 Rxf6 Rxf6 28 Rxf6 Nd7 (if 28...Qg8 29 Rxh6+) 29 Qf5+ Kg7 30 Re6 Qf7 and it seems Black is okay; or 26...g6 27 Rxf6 Rxf6 28 Rxf6 Qg8 and I think Black is okay again. Therefore, the move 26 h6 doesn't seem to work, but I don't see even another move on the board that could be characterized as developing the initiative for White.

Boris: It is not the kind of position that you can calculate until the end, but you are right that 26 h6 is the only move that develops the initiative. In the lines you analyzed, White has a decisive advantage; for example, 26...gxh6 27 Rxf6 Rxf6 28 Rxf6 Nd7 29 Re6 Qf7 30 Qh4 and Black can resign, or 26...g6 27 Rxf6 Rxf6 28 Rxf6 Qg8 29 Qf3 Kxh6 30 Rf8 Qg7 31 g4 with a mating attack. It looks like you underestimate the potential of White's attack. It is possible to estimate this without much calculation because White has an extra rook in the attack (Black's a5-rook is not helping). In such situations try not to calculate too much and instead use your intuition. The lines are too long and the advantages of 26 h6 are too obvious.

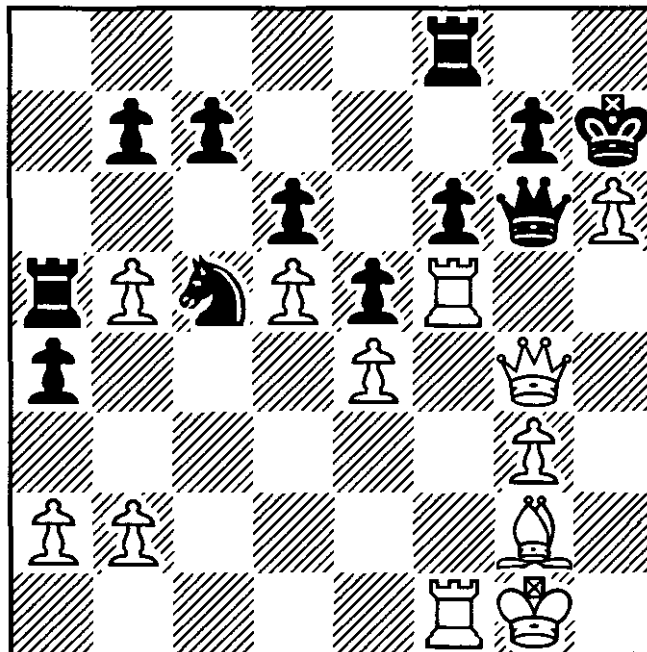
Joel: Most of the games in this book you have recommended that I calculate more and here you are telling me to stop calculating!

Boris: One of the most difficult decisions a chess player has to make is when to calculate and when to use intuition. If you try to calculate in a position when you have to use your judgment, you will spend too much time and will not receive an exact answer. However, if in a position that you have to calculate, you rely on common sense, then you can miss a narrow path to victory or a draw.

Joel: How do you know when to calculate and when to use your intuition?

Boris: You have to trust yourself and your experience. Of course, this ability is a function of your self-confidence. According to Capablanca, the recipe for building adequate self-confidence is to win all of your games. This advice is good even if you do not improve your self-confidence.

26 h6! Qg6



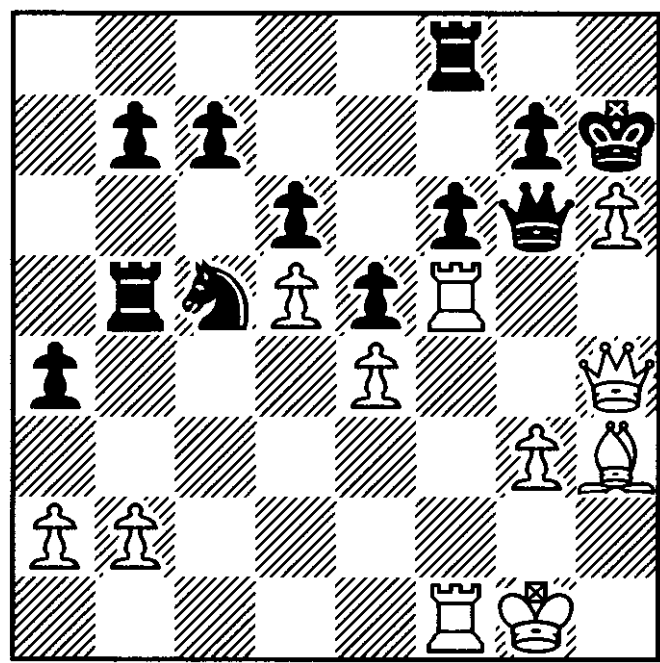
27 Qh4?

Boris: This is exactly when I made a mistake, trusting my intuition instead of calculating precisely. The correct way was 27 hxg7! Kxg7 28 Qe2! Qxg3 29 R1f3 Qg4 30 Qe1!, attacking the rook on a5 and threatening Rg3. White is winning. And in the case of 28...Raa8 29 g4 Rf7 30 g5 Raf8 31 Qe3 Black would also be under heavy pressure.

27...Rxb5?!

Boris: We both overestimated White's attack in the line 27...gxh6! 28 Bf3?! (28 Bh3 Kg7 was no better, but White could preserve drawing chances with 28 Rxf6! Rxf6 29 Rxf6 Qg5 30 Qxg5 hxg5 31 b6 cxb6 32 Rxd6 Rb5 33 b3 axb3 34 axb3 Rxb3 35 Kh2) 28...Rg8! (after the natural-looking 28...Rxb5? White is winning: 29 Bh5 Qg7 30 Rxf6 Rxf6 31 Rxf6 Qg5 32 Rf7+ Kg8 33 Qh3! Qe3+ 34 Rf2 Nxe4 35 Qc8+ Kh7 36 Qf5+ Kh8 37 Qf8+ Kh7 38 Bg6+! Kxg6 39 Qf7+ Kg5 40 Qf5 mate) 29 Kh2 Rxb5 30 Bh5 Rxb2+ 31 Kh3 Qg7 32 Bf7!? Qxf7 33 Rxf6 Rxb3+! 34 Kxb3 Qg7+ 35 Qg4 Rg2+ and Black is winning in the end. It is hard to imagine a human calculating all this when winning and losing hangs in the balance.

28 Bh3



Exercise: How does Black have to defend? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: White is threatening to play 29 Rh5 followed by 30 hxg7+ or 30 Bf5 winning. I think Black needs to create complications with 28...Nxe4! 29 Qxe4 Qxg3+ (the drawback of White's 28th move is that Black can capture on g3 with check) 30 Qg2 Qxg2+ 31 Bxg2 Rxb2 and Black gets three pawns for the piece and is threatening the a2- and h6-pawns.

Boris: To find the right defense here is really difficult. In the line you offered, after 29...Qxg3+ 30 Bg2 (instead of Qg2) White has a bishop for two pawns and the initiative, so I would evaluate it that as winning for White.

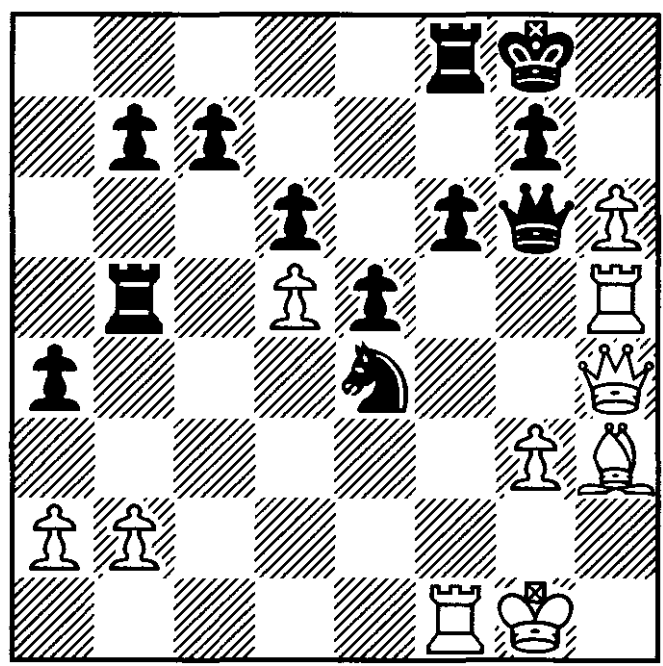
28...Kg8?

Boris: 28...Rxb2? allows the threat 29 Rh5 which you evaluated correctly as winning for White. Instead, Black had a decent defense by including his other rook in the game along the fourth rank with 28...Rb4!? 29 Rxe5 dxe5 30 Bf5 Qxf5 31 Rxf5 Rxe4 32 hxg7+ Kxg7 33 g4 Nd3 and it is already appropriate for White to force the draw with 34 Rg5+.

However, computer analysis shows that the paradoxical 28...Kh8!! would allow Black to turn the tables around. The critical line is 29 Rg5!? Qxg5! (not 29...fxg5? 30 Rxf8+ Kh7 31 Qg4 Rxb2 32 hxg7 Kxg7 33 Qc8 and White wins) 30 Qxg5 fxg5 31 Rxf8+ Kh7 32 Bf5+ g6 33 Rf7+ Kxh6 34 Rf6 Rxb2 35 Rxg6+ Kh7! (rather than 35...Kh5 36 Rg8 g4 37 Bxg4+ Kh6 38 Bf5 Rxa2 39 g4 a3 40 g5+ Kh5 41 g6 Kh6 42 Rh8+ Kg7 43 Rh7+ Kg8 44 Rxc7 Rb2 45 Rc8+ and White gives perpetual) 36 Rxd6+ Kg7 37 Rg6+ Kf8 38 Rh6 Na6!!, opening an escape route for the king to c5, and Black is winning.

29 Rh5 Nxe4

Boris: Black would lose after 29...Qxe4 30 Be6+ Kh8 31 hxg7+ Kxg7 32 Rg5+ fxg5 33 Qxg5+ Kh7 34 Bg8+! Rxg8 35 Qh5+ Kg7 46 Rf7 mate.



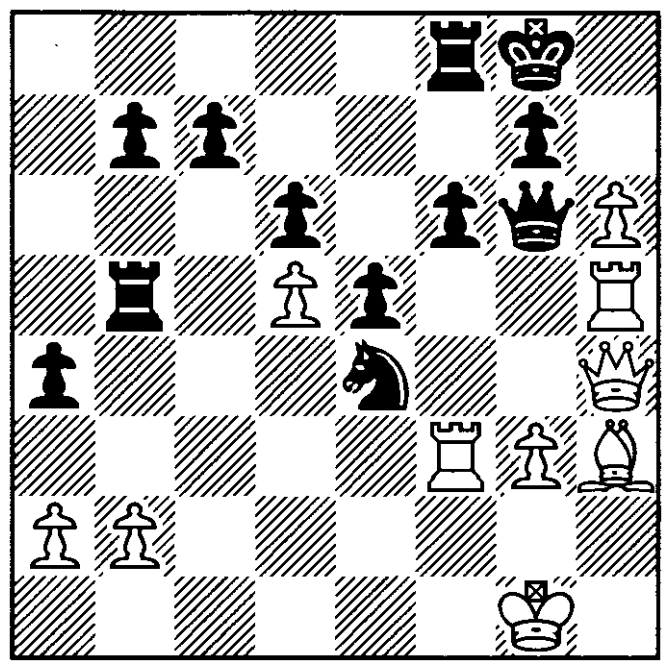
Exercise: What does White have to do? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: Black is threatening to liquidate (and win material) with 30...Qxg3+. If 30 Be6+ (which is tempting) then 30...Kh8 31 hxg7+ Kxg7 and it seems Black has escaped his troubles. If after 30...Kh8 White plays 31 Bf5, Black has 31...Qxg3+ 32

Qxg3 Nxg3 which forks all of White's pieces. Therefore, it doesn't seem that 30 Be6+ works, but I can't see anything else as other moves make 30...Rxb2 an important threat. Perhaps 30 Rf3 or 30 Rc1 but these don't feel right for the situation. White is playing down two pawns.

Boris: Your first intention was correct, but you didn't see the second move in the variation. White would have a winning position after 30 Be6+! Kh8 31 g4!, since Black doesn't have a reasonable defense against 32 Bf5. Although you didn't see the second move of the winning line, I didn't consider the first, so you are excused!

30 Rf3?



Exercise: What is the correct defense for Black? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: I like 30...Ng5, bringing reinforcements to the kingside and getting ready to exchange off White's valuable light-squared bishop (or win the exchange) with check. White has the interesting response 31 Rxg5!?, but I think Black ends up on top after 31...fxg5 (if 31...Qxg5 32 Qxg5 fxg5 33 Rxf8+ Kxf8 34 h7 wins for White) 32 h7+ Qxh7 33 Rxf8+ Kxf8 and White cannot take on g5 because the bishop on h3 is hanging.

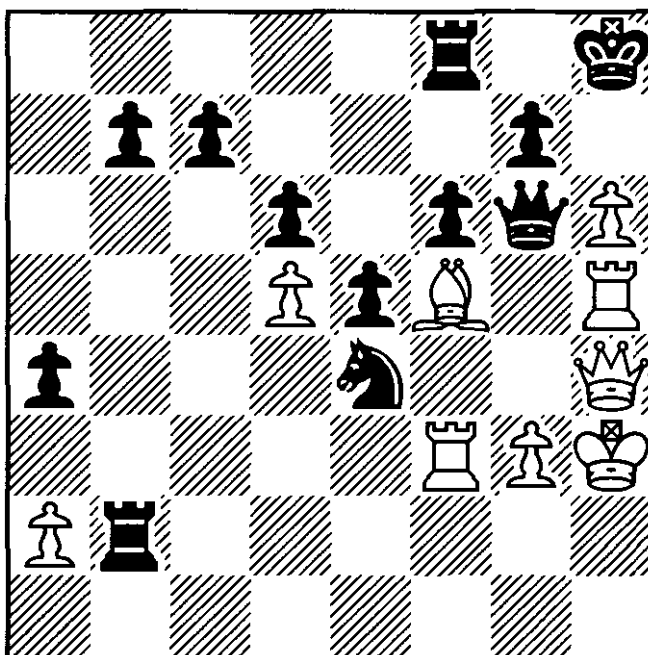
Boris: Again, you made you a mistake in your calculation, because in the final position the queen on h7 is en prise. Black had a very narrow path to escape. He had to play 30...Nd2! 31 Be6+ Kh8 32 hxg7+ Kxg7 33 Rf2 Qb1+ 34 Kg2 Qe4+ 35 Kh2 Qxh4+ 36 Rxh4 Rxb2 37 Rg4+ Kh6 38 Rh4+ with a draw by perpetual check.

More complicated lines follow 31 Rf2!?, but after 31...Qb1+! (not 31...Ne4? 32 Be6+ Kh8 33 hxc7+ Kxc7 34 Bf5 Qxc3+ 35 Qxc3+ Nxc3 36 Rh7+ Kg8 37 Rg2 and Black will be mated) 32 Kh2 Nf3+! (Black will suffer a quick and familiar mate after 32...Rxb2? 33 Be6+ Kh8 34 hxc7+ Kxc7 35 Rg5+ fxg5 36 Qxc5+ Kh7 37 Bg8+! Kh8 38 Qh6+) 33 Rxf3 Rxb2+ 34 Bg2 Qc2 35 Qh3 g6 36 Rh4 f5 it is already Black who is better.

30...Rxb2? 31 Be6+! Kh8

Boris: 31...Rf7 wouldn't have helped after 32 Bxf7+ Kxf7 (or 32...Qxf7 33 Qg4) 33 h7 Nd2 34 Rff5 and White is winning.

32 Bf5 Rb1+ 33 Kg2 Rb2+ 34 Kh3



34...Qxg3+

Boris: No better was 34...Ng5+ 35 Rxc5 Qxc5 36 hxc7+ Kxc7 37 Qh7 mate, or 34...Qxh5 35 Qxh5 Ng5+ 36 Kg4 Rb4+ 37 Rf4 exf4 38 gxf4 Rg8 39 Qg6 and Black is defenseless.

35 Qxg3 Nxg3 36 hxc7+ 1-0

Joel: What I appreciated most about this game was actually how Larsen was a moving target, which made it more difficult for you to formulate and execute your plan. With a fixed pawn structure, it is easier to formulate and execute plans of attack.

Boris: Among the many strategic ideas of this game, I would highlight the great skill with which Black created counterplay on the queenside. Another thing that made this game special was that White's light-squared bishop was bad according to classical theory. However, in real life, it was very good. Because my pawns were on light squares in a closed position, his pawns were on dark squares, making the light squares in his camp weak. Because I possessed the initiative my light-squared bishop was useful in that it could exploit the light square weaknesses in his camp. If it had to defend, my bishop would have been really bad, because it would have defended the same squares as my pawns and the dark squares in my camp would have been weak.

The last thing about this game is that it is very important to figure out when to spend our time and calculate and when to trust our intuition. Mistakes in this respect can be very costly. If we try to calculate all opportunities in the game, we will not have enough time and energy to calculate when we need it in order to find the only way to victory or a draw.

Game Twenty-Five
B.Gulko-G.Kasparov
 Linares 1990
King's Indian Defense

Boris: This was my fourth game with Kasparov. When you play with Garry, the biggest problem is preparation. He was the best in the world in opening theory. It was practically impossible to find a variation where Garry would be unprepared. So when I prepared for this game, I worked with a new idea based on a novelty played just before the start of this tournament by Razuvaev (who is a close friend of mine). I checked his idea and found it to be promising, but it was still Garry who played a novelty first.

Joel: So he was prepared.

Boris: Yes.

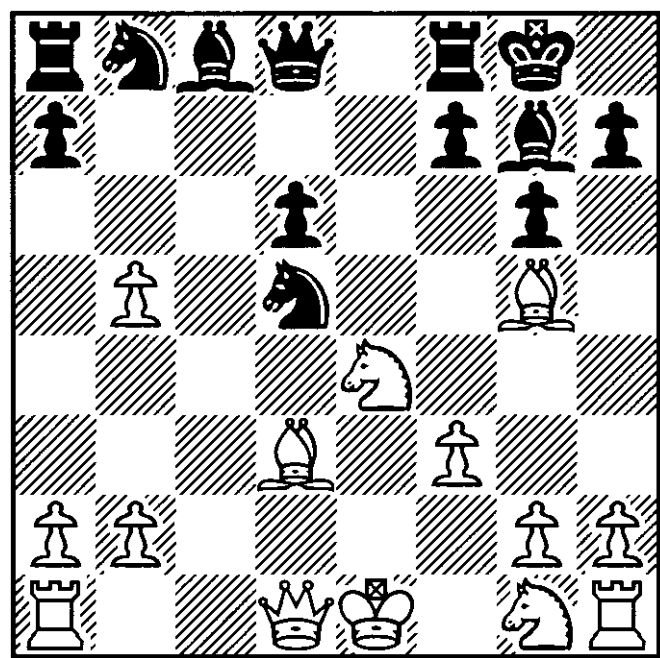
Joel: I didn't know that about him. I saw an interview with him about training Carlsen and he said "I probably have the largest database of opening theory still."

Boris: Yes, he was ahead of everyone in opening preparation in his generation and maybe even today. Garry's style was very intense. He tried to create extremely complicated positions in which no one could play well. This game was also extremely complicated, and this is the reason why we both didn't find the best solutions all the time.

1 d4 Nf6 2 c4 g6 3 Nc3 Bg7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 Be3 c6 7 Bd3 e5 8 d5 b5 9 cxb5

Boris: When I came to this position I started to think about playing 9 a3. Now I think 9 a3 is best because White keeps the position closed and has good chances to play on the queenside. A good example of this is the game V.Ivanchuk-J.Piket, Tilburg 1989, which continued: 9 a3 cxd5 10 cxd5 a6 11 Nge2 Ne8 12 0-0 Nd7 13 Kh1 Kh8 14 b4 f5 15 exf5 gxf5 16 a4 with advantage to White. For me, however, it was a pity to play 9 a3, throwing away all of my preparation.

9...cxd5 10 exd5 e4 11 Nxe4 Nxd5 12 Bg5



12...Qb6!

Boris: 12...Qb6 is an important novelty that Garry prepared for this game. I anticipated 12...Qa5+, and hoped to improve on the play of Timman, which continued: 13 Qd2 Qxd2+ 14 Bxd2 Bxb2 15 Rd1! (instead Timman played 15 Rb1 Bg7 16 Ne2 Nd7 17 Nxd6 Nc5 and Black obtained an active position, J.Timman-G.Kasparov, Reykjavik 1988) 15...Nd7 16 Ne2 N7b6 17 Nxd6 with better prospects for White, Y.Razuvaev-J.Lautier, Paris 1989. After Garry's novelty, I had a new problem to solve.

Joel: So you were "out of book" at this point?

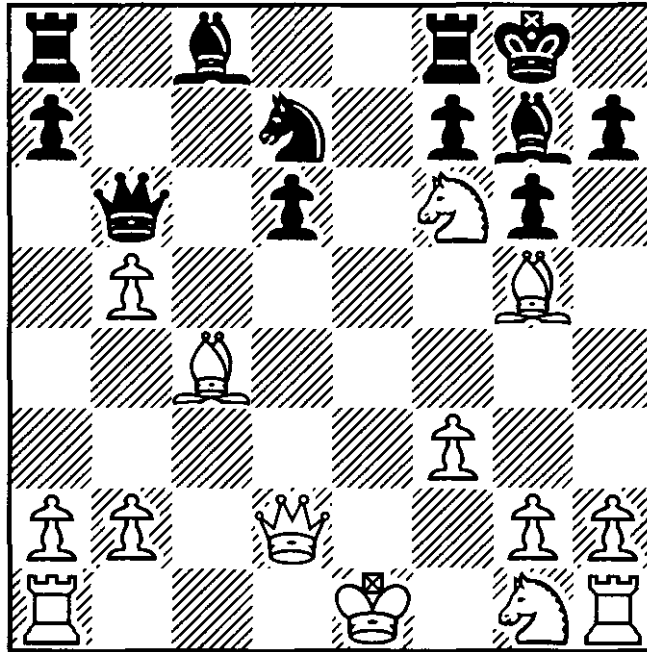
Boris: Yes, and the problems I had to solve were very complicated.

13 Qd2 Nd7 14 Bc4 N5f6 15 Nxf6+

Boris: I'm sure Garry's analysis was devoted to the principled 15 Nxd6. However, I didn't have any wish to check his analysis. After my last move, Garry started to think too. When you run into your opponent's homework, it is important to get them out of their preparation as quickly as possible.

Joel: So this was psychological more than anything?

Boris: Yes. I cannot say that I thought it was stronger, but it was safer and when you play a position that your opponent has analyzed and you haven't, safety is your first concern. After 15 Nxf6+, we are already equal (psychologically).



Exercise: Which piece has to take on f6 and why? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: White is a pawn up but his king is stuck in the center. Black would like to take advantage of White's vulnerable king, but how? If 15...Bxf6 then 16 Bxf6 Nxf6 and Black controls the d5-square and threatens to play ...d6-d5, restricting and pushing back White's bishop. Black might follow with ...Rfe8 and ...Bc8-a6 with pressure. Therefore, I would take back with the bishop.

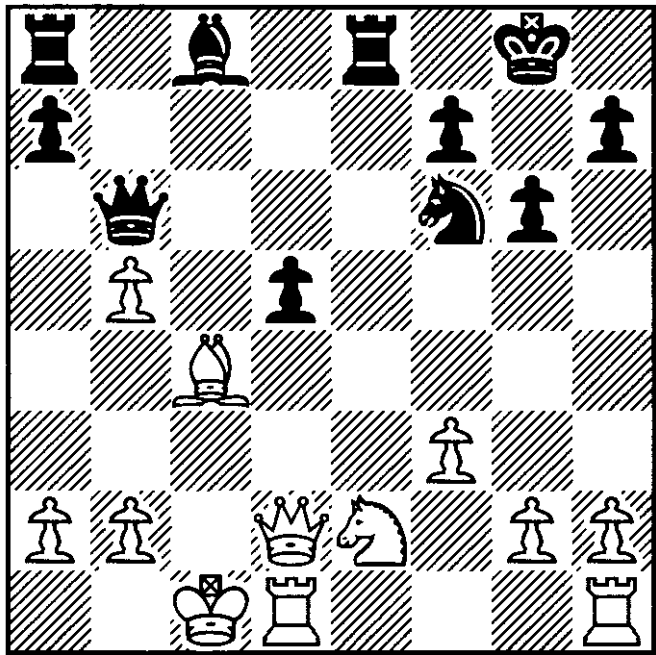
Boris: Although you played as Garry did, it was wrong. I think there is quite a bit more in this position to consider and understand. To solve this very difficult problem, two steps were involved. First, you had to figure out the differences between the two recaptures. The difference is that by taking with the knight, Black allows White to play Bg5-h4-f2 and to castle kingside, where White's king will be relatively safe. By taking with the bishop Black practically forces White to castle queenside.

The second step is that you have to evaluate the resulting positions after each recapture. Although Black would prefer to have White's king on the queenside in this position, White has good prospects after queenside castling because Black's dangerous dark-squared bishop is gone. Much better was 15...Nxf6!, permitting White to castle kingside. The reason is that Black's bishop on g7 is more valuable to Black than White's bishop on g5 is to White. The overarching principle to be applied here is not to exchange your more valuable pieces for your opponent's less valuable pieces. In this regard, Garry made a mistake because the right solution was paradoxical.

15...Bxf6?!

Boris: We can figure out that it was more important to keep more pieces on the board than it was to prevent White from repositioning the bishop to f2 only after extensive analysis: 15...Nxf6!? 16 Ne2 Re8 and if 17 Bh4 d5 18 Bf2 (it is better for White to avoid 18 Bd3 Bb7! 19 Bf2 d4 20 O-O Nd5 21 Rfc1 Ne3 22 Bg3 Bh6 with heavy pressure from Black) 18...Qe6 19 Bd3 Ne4! with drawish simplifications after 20 fxe4 dxe4 21 Nf4 e3 22 Bxe3 Qxe3+ 23 Qxe3 Rxe3+ 24 Kd2 Re5 25 Rhe1 Bb7 or 21...Qe5 22 Bc4 e3 23 Qxe3 Qxe3+ 24 Bxe3 Rxe3+ 25 Kd2 Re4 26 Bd5 Rd4+ 27 Ke3 Rb8 28 Bc6. In both cases Black has two bishops and does not risk losing.

16 Bxf6 Nxf6 17 Ne2 Re8 18 O-O-O! d5



Exercise: Where should the bishop retreat? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: White needs to hold onto his pawn. I think the natural retreat 19 Bd3 makes sense, but it has the disadvantage of clogging up the d-file, which prevents White from blockading Black's d-pawn. Can White justify 19 Bb3 tactically? Yes. After 19 Bb3 Qxb5 20 Nc3 White can regain his pawn with 21 Nxd5 and will have a healthy 2:1 queenside pawn majority.

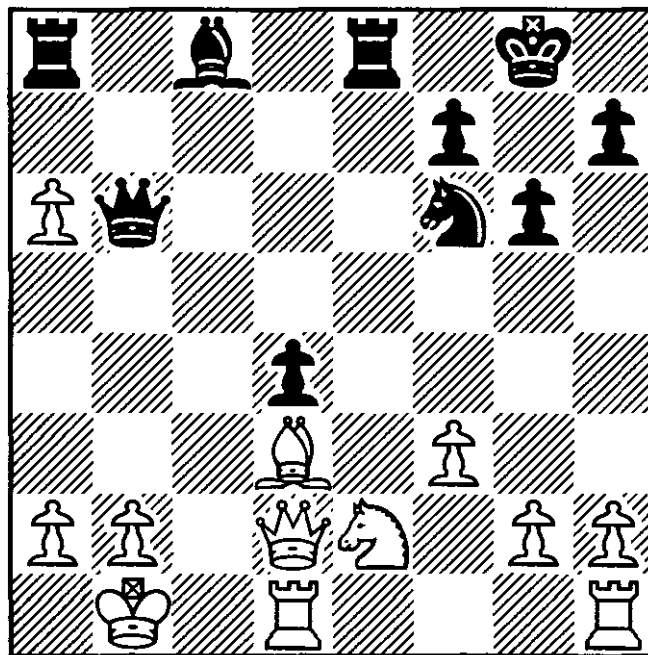
Boris: Your choice is correct, but the motivation behind the move (to win the d5-pawn) was wrong. The right way was 19 Bb3! Qxb5 20 Nc3 Qb6 21 Qd4!, when White kills any Black initiative and has a significant advantage. If White takes the pawn as you wanted, Black would receive a tremendous attack after 21 Nxd5

Nxd5 22 Bxd5 Bf5!. For White, it is important not to win the pawn but to neutralize Black's activity. Black's pawn on d5 is weak and sooner or later will be lost. The reason I didn't play 19 Bb3 was because I was afraid of 19...Rxe2 20 Qxe2 Bf5 21 Rd2 Rc8+ 22 Bc2 d4 and Black threatens 23...Rxc2 24 Rxc2 d3. After the game, however, Garry showed that it could be refuted with 23 g4!, which I had missed.

19 Bd3? a6 20 bxa6

Boris: A different way to play this position would have been 20 Kb1!? axb5 21 Bc2, planning to put the knight on d4 and the bishop on b3, protecting a2.

20...d4 21 Kb1



21...Re3?

Boris: Typical for Garry, he plays the most aggressive move, but it looks like he miscalculated. Correct was 21...Bxa6! 22 Bxa6 Rxa6 (in the case of 22...Qxa6?! 23 Nc1 White's queenside is safe) 23 Nxd4! (better than 23 Rhe1?!, which was recommended by Ljubojevic, because after 23...Ra4 Black has heavy pressure) 23...Rea8 24 Nc2!? (24 b3 leaves Black with the initiative) 24...Rxa2 25 Qd4! Qe6! (25...Qa6 26 Qd6! was bad for Black) 26 Rhe1 Qf5 27 Qd3 Qc5 28 Qd4 Qf5 29 Qd3 and neither side can avoid the repetition.

22 Bc4! Bxa6

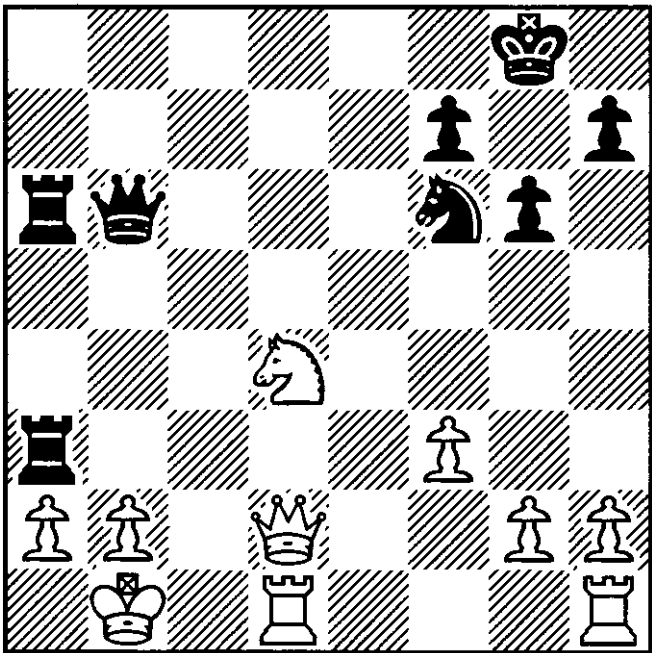
Boris: 22...d3? 23 Nc1 Bxa6 24 Bxa6 Rxa6 25 Rhe1 would not promising anything for Black.

23 Bxa6 Rxa6

Boris: After 23...Qxa6 24 Nc1 White is much better.

24 Nxd4 Re8

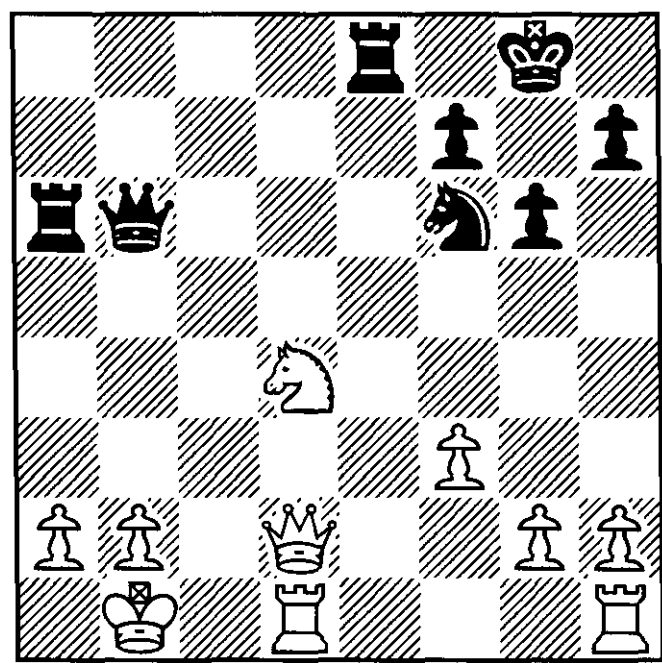
Boris: Garry's intention was to play 24...Rea3, but then:



Exercise: What did he overlook? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: First, White must figure out how to defend. I like 25 Nc2 and play would become very sharp: 25...Rxa2 26 Qd8+ Qxd8 27 Rxd8+ Kg7, when White is a pawn up in the endgame.

Boris: You almost solved the position except you didn't find the last move of the variation: 28 Na3!, which wins for White. Without this, it would be difficult for White to win. This is what Garry overlooked when he played 21...Re3, and is why he retreated with 24...Re8.



Exercise: Which move does White have to prevent and how? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: White has to prevent the move 25...Rea8, when the pressure on White's queenside would be near the breaking point. 25 Qc3 allows 25...Nd5, adding more pieces to the attack. Therefore, I like the move 25 Nb3 with the idea of playing Nc1, holding the a2-pawn. I remember reading that you can't get mated with a knight on f8 so I imagine that's true in reverse. Black can play 25...Rxa2!? 26 Kxa2 Ra8+ 27 Kb1 Qxb3, but I don't think he has enough.

25 Ne2!

Boris: My understanding of this position is that it is very important for White to restrict the movement of the knight on f6. If Black does not include his knight in the action, his initiative will be insufficient and White has to win because of his extra pawns. So White has to move his knight from d4 preventing ...Nf6-d5. After the text move (25 Ne2), the knight on f6 cannot join the other black pieces, the a2-square will be protected by the white knight from the active position on c3 (which is preferable to your suggestion of bringing the knight to c1) and Black's position becomes bad.

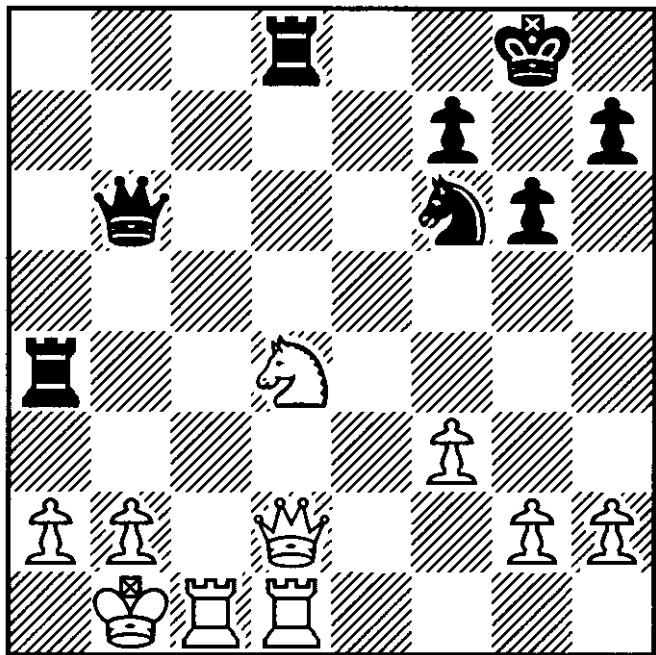
The move you were afraid of, 25...Rea8, is not preventable but you are right that White has to prepare a defense against it. I think your suggestion 25 Nb3 has merits, but it is inferior to the move played in the game. I am glad you considered the exchange sacrifice, but I would not evaluate it as clear because White would have a permanently weak king. This is another reason I would not play 25 Nb3. It seems

you gave up on your calculations and had the attitude that Black would have to prove that his exchange sacrifice was worth it. However, at the moment you stopped calculating, you could not estimate the position clearly. You have to calculate variations until you can evaluate the resulting position.

Worse than 25 Ne2 was 25 Nc2 Rb8 26 Ne3 Rba8 with serious pressure for Black. The computer offers an interesting alternative in 25 Rc1!? Qb7! (preventing 26 Rc6) 26 Rc4 Rea8 27 Rhc1 Rxa2 28 Rc8+ Rxc8 29 Rxc8+ Qxc8 30 Kxa2 Qa6+ and as long as Black avoids the exchange of queens, White hardly can use his extra pawn.

Joel: I think a lot of people would think this position is winning for White.

Boris: White's king position is too weak. Instead, in the case of the natural 25...Rd8 26 Rhd1 Ra4, then:

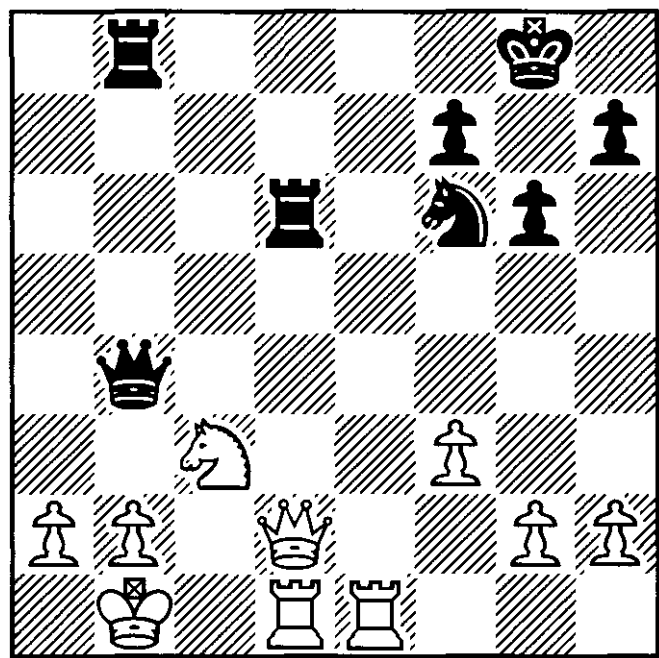


Exercise: Which move does White have to play? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I would play 27 Rc6 when either a) 27...Qxc6 28 Nxc6 Rxd2 29 Rxd2, or b) 27...Raxd4 28 Rxc6 Rxd2 29 Rxd2 Rxd2 30 Rxf6 Rxd2 31 h4 looks better for White.

Boris: After 27 Rc6, Black has the queen retreat 27...Qa7 and White has to find the combination starting with 28 Nf5!! But this combination works immediately: 27 Nf5!! Raa8 (or 27...Rda8 28 Rc6! Qb5 29 Rxf6) 28 Qxd8+ Rxd8 29 Rxd8+ Qxd8 30 Rc8! and White wins.

25...Rb8 26 Nc3 Qb4 27 Rhe1 Rd6



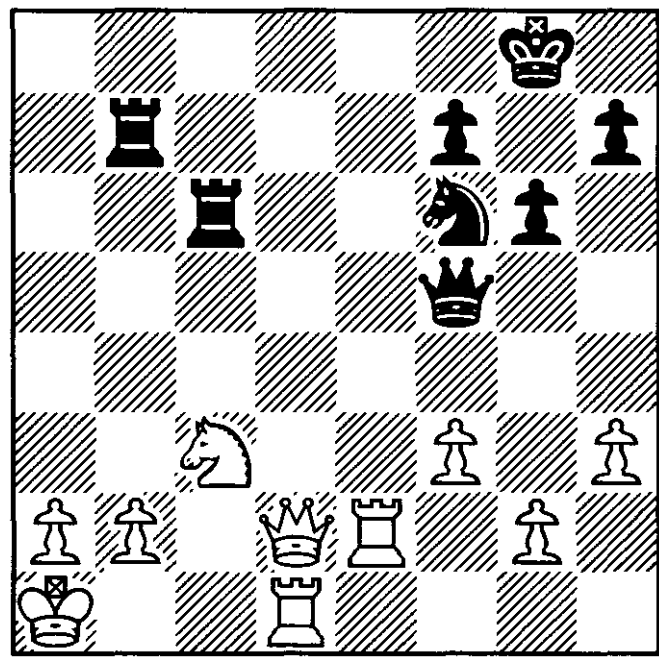
28 Qc2?!

Boris: An inaccuracy which gives Black additional chances. 28 Qc1! was more precise.

28...Rdb6 29 Re2 Qf4 30 h3 Rc6

Boris: Garry and I both thought that 30...Rxb2+!? 31 Qxb2 Rxb2+ 32 Kxb2 was winning for White, but it was more stubborn than the move in the game.

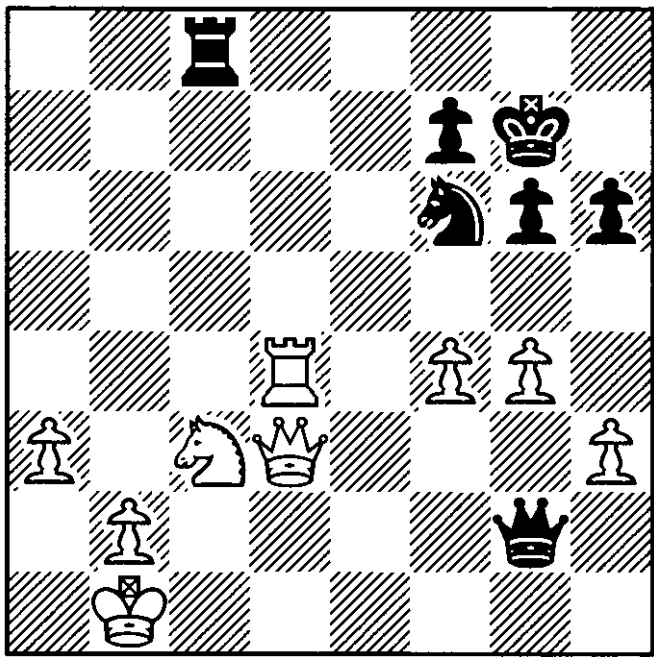
31 Qd2 Qf5+ 32 Ka1 Rb7



33 Qh6!

Boris: White starts to create threats to Black's king. Computer analysis shows a shorter way in 33 g4! Qc5 (after 33...Qxf3 34 Re3 Black suddenly loses his queen) 34 Qd4. But why rush in such a pleasant position? White will slowly improve his position, not giving Black any chances.

33...Rc8 34 Red2 Qa5 35 Qe3 Kg7 36 g4! Re8 37 Qd4 Rd7 38 Qf2 Rc7 39 Rd3 Ra8 40 Qd2 h6 41 Rd6 Rc4 42 Rd4! Rac8 43 Kb1 Qe5 44 f4 Qe6 45 Qe2! Rxd4 46 Rxd4 Qb6 47 Qd2 Qa6 48 Qd3 Qc6 49 a3! Qg2



Exercise: What is the best way for White? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I hate these kinds of positions. White is two pawns up, but it seems that any attempt to activate them makes White's king vulnerable. Obviously White would like to trade queens but how? Given that White's pieces are well placed, I think it is time for a pawn lunge with 50 f5, when 50...gxf5 opens the g-file and weakens Black's king, while 50...g5 closes the kingside but weakens f7 and creates some claustrophobia for Black's king. Black must do something as he cannot allow 51 fxg6.

Boris: It is very important not to miss opportunities to attack your opponent. Here White plays his first active move in the game, which immediately decides it.

50 Rd6!

Boris: Taking action against the restricted f6-knight.

50...Rb8

Boris: The knight can't move. If 50...Ne8, 51 Rxg6+! fxg6 52 Qd7+ wins.

51 Qe2 Qh1+

Boris: If 51...Qxh3 then 52 Qe5 wins immediately.

52 Ka2 Re8 53 Qd3 Re1 54 Qd4 1-0

Joel: I was really amazed by the first problem you posed. I had a fifty-fifty chance of getting the right solution and thought I was being clever by suggesting 15...Bxf6. I think the most natural move in that position, the move you would play in a blitz game, would be 15...Nxf6. However, after going over the position with you, and considering what needed to be evaluated on a positional basis, I realized that I had absolutely no idea what was going on.

Boris: Yes, but you can't be upset, because Garry didn't solve the problem either. It was a very complicated game with several turning points. First, my choice on move 9 gave Black interesting dynamic opportunities. If I were to play this game again, I would choose the positional 9 a3. The next crucial moment, which you highlighted, was deciding with which piece to recapture on move 15. Among different considerations, the most important was the relative value of pieces. By exchanging his dark-squared bishop, Black's position lost dynamic momentum. Realizing his advantage, White used two important rules: 1) not to rush, and 2) not to miss active opportunities.

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Lessons with a Grandmaster

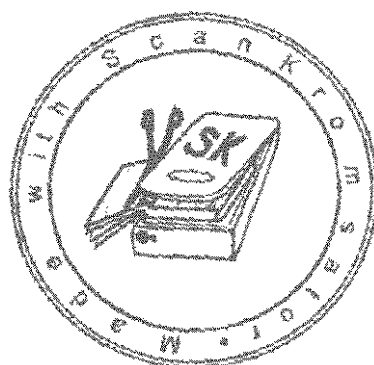
Smyslov – 20

Suetin – **10**

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Wolff – **6**

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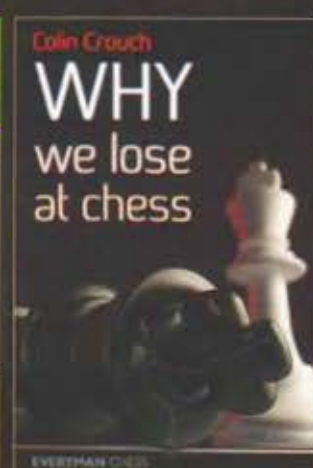
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